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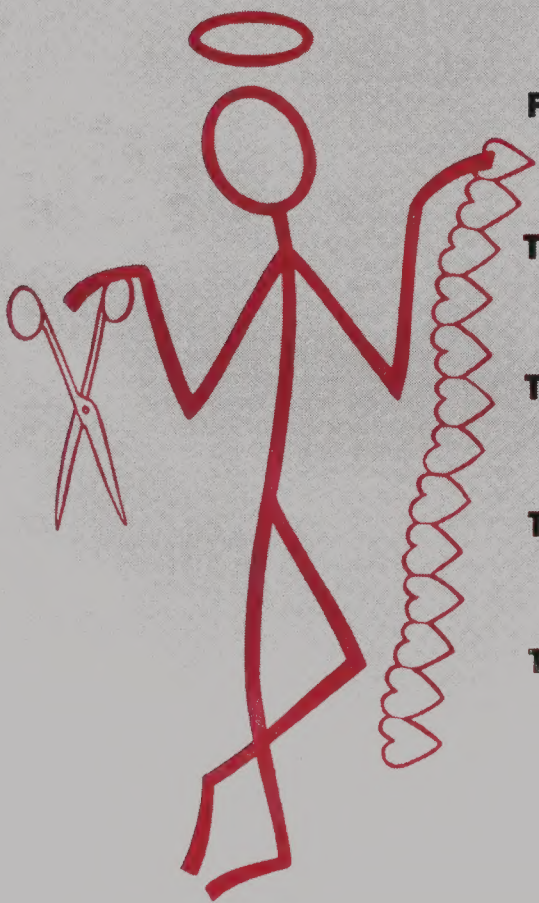
THE ®

# saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS



Flowers from the Dead
by CORNELL WOOLRICH

Tears of Evil
by CRAIG RICE

The Spherical Ghoul
by FREDRIC BROWN

The Purloined Letter
by EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Charitable Countess
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

**Death Among the Geraniums**
A NEW STORY by WILLIAM O'FARRELL

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

If I were any longer addicted to Viewing With Alarm, I might be discouraged by the thought that this Introduction may never be published, or anything else either by the date it is intended for, since such volatile things as paper and presses could have been reduced to radioactive debris by a more spectacular achievement of technology. But I am either too optimistic, too stupid, or too fatalistic to do anything but carry on as usual until somebody decides whether or not to press the button.

During this jolly interregnum I look back nostalgically on the last war, which now seems almost playful and glamorous by comparison, when bombs didn't kill anyone except those who were unlucky enough to be within a few yards of the blast. In those innocent days, by which I mean before Hiroshima, aside from the Saint's fictionized participation, his little stick-figure trademark took a real-life part.

I was sent a photo of a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain with the figure painted beside the cockpit. Another with the same symbol chalked on a big gun in New Guinea. An English bomber training squadron asked permission to take the Saint as their emblem. A British chaplain followed the campaign in North Africa with a Saint figure emblazoned on his jeep, and returned later to found a youth club in the slums of London which he first called the Saint Club, which has since passed through many vicissitudes but is still doing its job. A carrier-based U. S. Navy squadron flew all over the South Pacific under the Saint insignia, acquiting itself with conspicuous distinction.

It could be morbidly amusing to speculate about where our trademark will show up in the next unpleasantness. I have a son-in-law helping to navigate an American submarine. Will he remember to sketch a haloed skeleton on one of his torpedoes or Polaris missiles before launching it? Will spelunkers of some future century puzzle over a Saint figure scratched on the wall of an incomprehensible concrete cavern discovered in the heart of the Rocky Mountains?

At least I know that our mascot is ready to make the scene again; for I have it on the authority of our military expert and occasional contributor, Major George Fielding Eliot, that America's anti-satellite program, called "SAtellite INspection Technique", is officially abbreviated to SAINT.

Leslie Charteris

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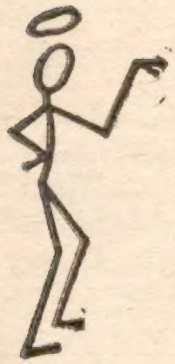

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# the charitable countess

*by... Leslie Charteris*

**When she cast her bread upon the waters, she had to be sure that it would come back cake . . . .**

SIMON TEMPLAR'S mail, like that of any other celebrity, was a thing of infinite variety. Perhaps it was even more so than that of most celebrities, for actors and authors and the other usual recipients of fan mail are of necessity a slightly smaller target for the busy letter-writer than a man who has been publicized at frequent intervals as a twentieth-century Robin Hood, to the despair and fury of the police officials at whose expense the publicity has been achieved. Of those correspondents who approached him under his better-known *nom de guerre* of "The Saint," about half were made up of people who thought that the nickname should be taken literally, and half of people who suspected that it stood for the exact opposite.

There were, of course, the collectors of autographs and signed photos. There were the hero-worshipping schoolboys whose ideas of a future profession would have shocked their fathers, and the romantic schoolgirls whose ideals of a future husband would have made their mothers swoon. There were also romantic maidens who were not so young, who supplied personal data of sometimes star-

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*TO SIMON, THE CHARITY RACKET WAS ONE OF THE MEANEST IN THE BOOK, NO MATTER HOW IT MIGHT BE GLAMORIZED.*

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From: THE HAPPY HIGHWAYMAN
Copyright 1939 by Leslie Charteris

tling candour and whose propositions were correspondingly more concrete.

And then there were the optimists who thought that the Saint would like to finance a South American revolution, a hunt for buried treasure on the Spanish Main, a new night club or an invention for an auxiliary automatic lighter to light automatic lighters with. There were the plodding sportsmen who could find a job in some remote town, thereby saving their wives and children from imminent starvation, if only the Saint would lend them the fare. There were the old ladies who thought that the Saint might be able to trace their missing Pomeranians, and the old gentlemen who thought that he might be able to exterminate the damned Socialists. There were crooks and cranks, fatheads and fanatics, beggars, liars, romancers, idiots, thieves, rich men, poor men, the earnest, the flippant, the gay, the lonely, the time-wasters and the genuine tragedies, all that strange and variegated section of humanity that writes letters to total strangers; and then sometimes the letters were not from one stranger to another, but were no less significant, like a letter that came one morning from a man named Marty O'Connor:

*"I should of written you before but I didn't want you to think I was asking for a handout. I stuck at that job in Canada and we were doing fine. I thought we were all set but the guy was playing the markit, I didn't know he was that dumb, so the nex thing is hes bust, the garage is sold up and Im out a job. I could not get nothing else there, but I hear the heat is off in New York now so me and Cora hitchike back, I got a job as chaufer an hold that 3 weeks til the dame hears I got a police record, she won't believe Im going strait now. I got the bums rush, havent found nothing since, but Cora does odd jobs and I may get a job any day. When I do you got to come see us again, we never fergot what you done for us and would do the same for you anytime if we burn for it. . .*

That was a reminder of two people whom he had helped because he liked them and because he thought they were worth helping, in one of those adventures that made all his lawlessness seem worth while to him, whatever the moralists might say. Marty O'Connor, who put off writing to his friend for fear of being suspected of begging, was a very different character from many others who wrote with no such scruples and with less excuse—such as the Countess Jannowicz, whose letter came in the same mail.

The smile which Simon had had for Marty's letter turned cynical as he read it. On the face of it, it was a very genteel and dignified epis-

tle, tastefully engraved under an embossed coronet, and printed on expensive handmade paper. The Countess Jannowicz, it said, requested the pleasure of Mr. Simon Templar's company at a dinner and dance to be held at the Waldorf-Astoria on the twentieth of that month, in aid of the National League for the Care of Incurables, R.S.V.P. That in itself would have been harmless enough, but the catch came in very small copperplate at the foot of the invitation, in the shape of the words, *"Tickets* $25"—and in the accompanying printed pamphlet describing the virtues of the League and its urgent need of funds.

Simon had heard from her before, as had many other people in New York, for she was a busy woman. Born as Maggie Oaks in Weehawken, New Jersey, resplendent later as Margaretta Olivera in a place of honour in the nuder tableaux at the Follies, she had furred her nest with a notable collection of skins, both human and animal, up to the time when she met and married Count Jannowicz, a Polish boulevardier of great age and reputedly fabulous riches. Disdaining such small stuff as alimony, she had lived with him faithfully and patiently until the day of his death, which in defiance of all expectations he had postponed for an unconscionable time through more and more astounding stages of senility, only to discover after the funeral that he had been living for all that time on an annuity which automatically ceased its payments forthwith; so that after nineteen years of awful fidelity his widowed countess found herself the proud inheritor of a few more furs, a certain amount of jewellery, a derelict castle already mortgaged for more than its value and some seventeen kopeks in hard cash.

Since she was then forty-four, and her outlines had lost the voluptuousness which had once made them such an asset to the more artistic moments of the Follies, many another woman might have retired to the companionable obsecurity of her fellow unfortunates in some small Riviera pension. Not so Maggie Oaks, who had the stern marrow of Weehawken in her bones. At least she had the additional intangible asset of a genuine title, and during her spouse's doggedly declining years she had whiled away the time consolidating the social position which her marriage had given her; so that after some sober consideration which it would have educated a bishop to hear, she was able to work out a fairly satisfactory solution to her financial problems.

Unlike Mr. Elliot Vascoe, of whom we have heard before, who used charity to promote his social ambitions, she used her social position to promote charities. What the charities were did not trouble her much, so long as they paid her the twenty-five per cent of the pro-

ceeds which was her standard fee. She had been known to sponsor, in the same day, a luncheon in aid of the Women's Society for the Prosecution of Immorality, and a ball in aid of the Free Hospital for Unmarried Mothers. As a means of livelihood it had been a triumphant inspiration. Social climbers fought to serve, expensively, on her committees; lesser snobs scrambled to attend her functions and get their names in the papers in such distinguished company; charitable enterprises, struggling against depressions, were only too glad to pass over some of the labour of extracting contributions from the public to such a successful organizer; and the Countess Jannowicz, nee Maggie Oaks, lived in great comfort on Park Avenue and maintained a chauffeur-driven Cadillac out of her twenty-five per cents, eked out by other percentages which various restaurants and hotels were only too glad to pay her for bringing them in business.

The Saint had had his piratical eye on her for a long time; and now, with the apt arrival of that last invitation at a period when he had no other more pressing business on his hands, it seemed as if the discounting of the charitable countess was a pious duty which could no longer be postponed. He called on her the same afternoon at her apartment, for when once the Saint had made up his mind to a foray the job was as good as done. A morning's meditation had been enough for him to sketch out a plan of campaign, and after that he saw no good reason to put it aside while it grew whiskers.

But what the plan was is of no importance, for he never used it. He had sent in a card bearing his venerable alias of Sebastian Tombs, but when the countess sailed into the luxuriously modernistic drawing-room in which the butler had parked him, she came towards him with outstretched hand and a grim smile that promised surprises a split second before she spoke. "Mr. Templar?" she said coolly. "I'm sorry I had to keep you waiting."

It would be unfair to say that the Saint was disconcerted—in a buccaneer's life nothing could be foreseen, anyway, and you had to be schooled to the unexpected. But a perceptible instant went by before he answered. "Why, hullo, Maggie," he murmured. "I was going to break it to you gently."

"A man with your imagination should have been able to do better. After all, Mr. Sebastian Tombs is getting to be almost as well known as the great Simon Templar—isn't he?"

The Saint nodded, admitting his lapse and making a mental note that the time had come to tear himself finally away from the alter ego to which he had clung with perverse devotion for too many years. "You keep pretty well up-to-date," he remarked.

"Why not?" she returned frank-

ly. "I've had an idea for some time that I'd be getting a visit from you one day."

"Would that be the voice of conscience?"

"Just common sense. Even you can't have a monopoly on thinking ahead."

Simon studied her interestedly. The vats of champagne which had sparkled down her gullet in aid of one charity or another over the past six years had left their own thin dry tang in her voice, but few of her other indulgences had left their mark. The cargoes of caviar, the schools of smoked salmon, the truckloads of *foie gras,* the coveys of quail, the beds of oysters and the regiments of lobsters which had marched in eleemosynary procession through her intestines, had resolved themselves into very little solid flesh. Unlike most of her kind, she had not grown coarse and flabby; she had aged with a lean and arid dignity. At fifty, Maggie Oaks, late of Weehawken and the Follies, really looked like a countess, even if it was a rather tart and dessicated countess. She looked like one of those brittle fish-blooded aristocrats who stand firm for kindness to animals and discipline for the lower classes. She had hard bright eyes and hard lines cracked into the heavy layers of powder and enamel on her face, and she was a hard bad woman in spite of her successful sophistication.

"At least that saves a lot of explanations," said the Saint, and she returned his gaze with her coldly quizzical stare.

"I take it that I was right—that you've picked me for your next victim."

"Let's call it 'contributor,' " suggested the Saint mildly.

She shrugged. "In plain language, I'm either to give you, or have stolen from me, whatever sum of money you think fit to assess as a fine for what you would call my misdeeds."

"Madam, you have a wonderful gift of coming to the point."

"This money will be supposedly collected for charity," she went on, "but you will take your commission for collecting it before you pass it on."

"That was the general idea, Maggie."

She lighted a cigarette. "I suppose I shouldn't be allowed to ask why it's a crime for me to make a living in exactly the same way as you do?"

"There is a difference. I don't set myself up too seriously as a public benefactor. As a matter of fact, most people would tell you that I was a crook. If you want that point of view, ask a policeman."

Her thin lips puckered with watchful mockery. "That seems to make me smarter than you are, Mr. Templar. The policeman would arrest you, but he'd tip his hat to me."

"That's possible," Simon admit-

ted imperturbably. "But there are other differences."

"Meaning what?"

"Mathematical ones. A matter of simple economy. When I collect money, unless I'm trying to put things right for someone else who's been taken for a mug, between seventy-five and ninety per cent of it really does go to charity. Now suppose you collect ten thousand dollars in ticket sales for one of your parties. Twenty-five hundred bucks go straight into your pocket —you work on the gross. Other organizing expenses take up at least a thousand dollars more. Advertising, prizes, decorations, publicity and what not probably cost another ten per cent. Then there's the orchestra, hire of rooms and waiters and the cost of a lot of fancy food that's much too good for the people who eat it—let's say four thousand dollars. And the caterers give you a five hundred dollar cut on that. The net result is that you take in three thousand dollars and a nice big dinner, and the good cause gets maybe fifteen hundred. In other words, every time one of your suckers buys one of your fifty-dollar tickets, to help to save fallen women or something like that, he gives you twice as much as he gives the fallen women, which might not be exactly what he had in mind. So I don't think we really are in the same class."

"You don't mean that I'm in a better class?" she protested sarcastically.

The Saint shook his head. "Oh no," he said. "Not for a moment... But I do think that some of these differences ought to be adjusted."

Her mouth was as tight as a trap. "And how will that be done?"

"I thought it'd be an interesting change if you practised a little charity yourself. Suppose we set a donation of fifty thousand dollars—"

"Do you really think I'd give you fifty thousand dollars?"

"Why not?" asked the Saint reasonably. "Other people have. And the publicity alone would be almost worth it. Ask your press agent. Besides, it needn't really even cost you anything. That famous diamond necklace of yours, for instance—even in the limited markets I could take it to, it'd fetch fifty thousand dollars easily. And if you bought yourself a good imitation hardly anyone would know the difference."

For a moment her mouth stayed open at the implication of what he was saying, and then she burst into a deep cackle of laughter. "You almost scared me," she said. "But people have tried to bluff me before. Still, it was nice of you to give me the warning." She stood up. "Mr. Templar, I'm not going to threaten you with the police because I know that would only make you laugh. Besides, I think I can look after myself. I'm not going to give you fifty thousand

dollars, of course, and I'm not going to let you steal my necklace. If you can get either, you'll be a clever man. Will you come and see me again when you've hatched a plot?"

The Saint stood up also, and smoothed the clothes over his sinewy seventy-four inches. His lazy blue eyes twinkled. "That sounds almost like a challenge."

"You can take it as one if you like."

"I happen to know that your necklace isn't insured—no company in the country will ever carry you for a big risk since that fraudulent claim that got you a suspended sentence when you were in the Follies. Insurance company black lists don't fade."

Her thin smile broadened. "I got ten thousand dollars, just the same, and that's more than covered any losses I've had since," she said calmly. "No, Mr. Templar, I'm not worried about insurance. If you can get what you're after I'll be the first to congratulate you."

Simon's brows slanted at her with an impudent humour that would have given her fair warning if she had been less confident. He had completely recovered from the smithereening of his first ingenious plans, and already his swift imagination was playing with a new and better scheme. "Is that a bet?" he said temptingly.

"Do you expect me to put it in writing?"

He smiled back at her. "I'll take your word for it... We must tell the newspapers."

He left her to puzzle a little over that last remark, but by the time she went to bed she had forgotten it. Consequently she had a second spell of puzzlement a couple of mornings later when she listened to the twittering voice of one of her society acquaintances on the telephone. "My *dear,* how *too* original! Quite the *cleverest* thing I ever heard of... Oh, now you're just playing innocent! Of *course* it's in all the papers! And on the front page, too!... How *did* you manage it? My dear, I'm *madly* jealous! The Saint could steal anything I've got, and I mean *anything!* He must be the most *fascinating* man—isn't he?"

"He is, darling, and I'll tell him about your offer." said the countess instinctively. She hung up the microphone and said: "Silly old cow!" There had been another ball the night before, in aid of a seamen's mission or a dogs' hospital or something, and she had had to deal with the usual charitable ration of champagne and brandy; at that hour of the morning after her reactions were not as sharp as they became later in the day. Nevertheless, a recollection of the Saint's parting words seeped back into her mind with a slight shock. She took three aspirins in a glass of whiskey and rang for some newspapers.

She didn't even have to open the

first one. The item pricked her in the eyes just as the sheet was folded:

SAINT WILL ROB COUNTESS FOR CHARITY

*"It's a Bet,"* says Society Hostess

New York, October 12.—*Simon Templar, better known as "The Saint," famous 20th-century Robin Hood, added yesterday to his long list of audacities by announcing that he had promised to steal for charity the* $100,000 *necklace of Countess Jannowicz, the well-known society leader.*

*But for once the police have not been asked to prevent the intended crime. Templar called on the countess personally last Tuesday to discuss his scheme, and was told that she would be the first to congratulate him if he could get away with it.*

*The twist in the plot is that Countess Jannowicz is herself an indefatigable worker for charity, and the organizer of countless social functions through which thousands of dollars are annually collected for various hospitals and humane societies.*

*Those who remember the countess' many triumphs in roping in celebrities as a bait for her charities believe that she has surpassed herself with her latest "catch." It was whispered that the sensational stunt launching of some new*

(*continued on page nine*)

The countess read it all through, and then she put her head back on the pillows and thought about it some more and began to shake with laughter. The vibration made her feel as if the top of her head was coming off but she couldn't stop it. She was still quivering among her curlers when the telephone exploded again.

"It's someone from Police Headquarters," reported her maid. "Inspector Fernack."

"What the hell does he want?" demanded the countess. She took over the instrument. "Yes," she squawked.

"This is Inspector Fernack of Centre Street," clacked the diaphragm. "I suppose you've seen that story about the Saint and yourself in the papers?"

"Oh yes," said the countess sweetly. "I was just reading it. Isn't it simply delightful?"

"That isn't for me to say," answered the detective in a laboured voice. "But if this is a serious threat we shall have to take steps to protect your property."

"Take steps— Oh, but I don't want to make it *too* easy for him. He always seems to get away with everything when the police are looking out for him."

There was a strangled pause at the other end of the wire. Then:

"You mean that this is really only a publicity stunt?"

"Now, now," said the countess coyly. "That would be telling, wouldn't it? Good-bye, Inspector." She handed the telephone back to her maid. "If that damn flatfoot calls again, tell him I'm out," she said. "Get me some more aspirin and turn on my bath."

It was typical of her that she dismissed Fernack's offer without a moment's uneasiness. After she had bathed and swallowed some coffee, however, she did summon the sallow and perspiring Mr. Ullbaum who lived a feverish life as her press agent and vaguely general manager. "There'll be some reporters calling for interviews," she said. "Some of 'em have been on the phone already. Tell 'm anything that comes into your head, but keep it funny."

Mr. Ullbaum spluttered, which was a habit of his when agitated, which was most of the time. "But what's so funny if he does steal the necklace?"

"He isn't going to get the necklace— I'll take care of that. But I hope he tries. Everybody he's threatened to rob before has gone into hysterics before he's moved a finger, and they've been licked before he starts. I'm going to lick him and make him look as big as a flea at the same time—and all without even getting out of breath. We'll treat it as a joke now, and after he's made a fool of himself and it really *is* a joke, it'll be ten times funnier. For God's sake go away and use your own brain. That's what I pay you for. I've got a headache."

She was her regal self again by cocktail time, when the Saint saw her across the room at the Pavillon with a party of friends, immaculately groomed from the top of her tight-waved head to the toes of her tight-fitting shoes and looking as if she had just stepped out of an advertisement for guillotines. He sauntered over in answer to her imperiously beckoning forefinger. "I see your press agent didn't waste any time, Mr. Templar."

"I don't know," said the Saint innocently. "Are you sure you didn't drop a hint to your own publicity man?"

She shook her head. "Mr. Ullbaum was quite upset when he heard about it."

The Saint smiled. He knew the permanently flustered Mr. Ullbaum. "Then it must have been my bloke," he murmured. "How did you like the story?"

"I thought it was rather misleading in places, but Mr. Ullbaum is going to put that right. . . Still, the police are quite interested. I had a phone call from a detective this morning before I was really awake."

A faint unholy glimmer crossed the Saint's eyes. "Would that be Inspector Fernack, by any chance?"

"Yes."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him to leave me alone."

Simon seemed infinitesimally disappointed, but he grinned. "I was wondering why he hadn't come paddling around to see me and add some more fun to the proceedings. I'm afraid I'm going to miss him. But it's nice to play with someone like you who knows the rules."

"I know the rules, Mr. Templar," she said thinly. "And the first rule is to win. Before you're finished you're going to wish you hadn't boasted so loudly."

"You're not worried?"

She moved one jewel-encrusted hand indicatively. "Did you notice those two men at that table in the corner?"

"Yes—have they been following you? I'll call a cop and have them picked up if you like."

"Don't bother. Those are my bodyguards. They're armed and they have orders to shoot at the drop of a hat. Are you sure, *you* aren't worried?"

He laughed. "I never drop my hat." He buttoned his coat languidly, and the impudent scapegrace humour danced in his eyes like sunlight on blue water. "Well—I've got to go on with my conspiring, and I'm keeping you from your friends. . ."

There was a chorus of protest from the other women at the table, who had been craning forward with their mouths open breathlessly eating up every word. "Oh no!" ... "Countess, you *must* introduce us!"... "I've been dying to meet him!"

The countess's lips curled. "Of course, my dears," she said, with the sugariness of arsenic. "How rude of me!" She performed the introductions. "Lady Instock was telling me only this morning that you could steal *anything* from her," she added spikily.

*"Anything,"* confirmed Lady Instock, gazing at the Saint rapturously out of her pale protruding eyes.

Simon looked at her thoughtfully. "I won't forget it," he said.

As he returned to his own table he heard her saying to a unanimous audience: "Isn't he the most *thrilling—"*

Countess Jannowicz watched his departure intently, ignoring the feminine palpitations around her. She had a sardonic sense of humour, combined with a scarcely suppressed contempt for the climbing sycophants who crawled around her, that made the temptation to elaborate the joke too attractive to resist. Several times during the following week she was impelled to engineer opportunities to refer to "that Saint person who's trying to steal my necklace"; twice again, when their paths crossed in fashionable restaurants, she called him to her table for the express pleasure of twitting him about his boast. To demonstrate her contempt for his reputation by teasing him on such friendly terms, and at the same time to enjoy the awed

reactions of her friends, flattered something exhibitionistic in her that gave more satisfaction than any other fun she had had for years. It was like having a man-eating tiger for a pet and tweaking its ears.

This made nothing any easier for Mr. Ullbaum. The countess was already known as a shrewd collector of publicity and the seeds of suspicion had been firmly planted by the opening story. Mr. Ullbaum tried to explain to groups of sceptical reporters that the Saint's threat was perfectly genuine but that the countess was simply treating it with the disdain which it deserved; at the same time he tried to carry out his instructions to "keep it funny," and the combination was too much for his mental powers. The cynical cross-examinations he had to submit to usually reduced him to ineffectual spluttering. His disclaimers were duly printed, but in contexts that made them sound more like admissions.

The countess, growing more and more attached to her own joke, was exceptionally tolerant. "Let 'em laugh," she said. "It'll make it all the funnier when he flops."

She saw him a third time at supper at "21" and invited him to join her party for coffee. He came over, smiling and immaculate, as much at ease as if he had been her favourite nephew. While she introduced him—a briefer business now, for he had met some of the party before—she pointedly fingered the coruscating rope of diamonds on her neck. "You see I've still got it on," she said as he sat down.

"I noticed that the lights seemed rather bright over here," he admitted. "You've been showing it around quite a lot lately, haven't you? Are you making the most of it while you've got it?"

"I want to make sure that you can't say I didn't give you plenty of chances."

"Aren't you afraid that some ordinary grab artist might get it first? You know I have my competitors."

She looked at him with thinly veiled derision. "I'll begin to think there is a risk of that if you don't do something soon. And the suspense is making me quite jittery. Haven't you been able to think of a scheme yet?"

Simon's eyes rested on her steadily for a moment while he drew on his cigarette. "That dinner and dance you were organizing for Friday—you sent me an invitation," he said. "Is it too late for me to get a ticket?"

"I've got some in my bag. If you've got twenty-five dollars—"

He laid fifty dollars on the table. "Make it two— I may want someone to help me carry the loot."

Her eyes went hard and sharp for an instant before a buzz of excited comment from her listening guests shut her off from him. He smiled at them all inscrutably and firmly changed the subject while

he finished his coffee and smoked another cigarette. After he had taken his leave, she faced a bombardment of questions with stony preoccupation. "Come to the dance on Friday," was all she would say. "You may see some excitement."

Mr. Ullbaum, summoned to the Presence again the next morning, almost tore his hair. "Now will you tell the police?" he gibbered.

"Don't be so stupid," she snapped. "I'm not going to lose anything, and he's going to look a bigger fool than he has for years. All I want you to do is see that the papers hear that Friday is the day —we may sell a few more tickets."

Her instinct served her well in that direction at least. The stories already published, vague and contradictory as they were, had boosted the sale of tickets for the Grand Ball in aid of the National League for the Care of Incurables beyond her expectations, and the final announcement circulated to the press by the unwilling Mr. Ullbaum caused a flurry of last-minute buying that had the private ballroom hired for the occasion jammed to overflowing by eight o'clock on the evening of the twentieth. It was a curious tribute to the legends that had grown up around the name of Simon Templar, who had brought premature grey hairs to more police officers than could easily have been counted. Everyone who could read knew that the Saint had never harmed any innocent person, and there were enough sensation-seekers with clear consciences in New York to fill the spacious suite beyond capacity. Countess Jannowicz, glittering with diamonds, took her place calmly at the head table beside the chairman. He was the aged and harmlessly doddering bearer of a famous name who served in the same honorary position in several charitable societies and boards of directors without ever knowing much more about them than was entailed in presiding over occasional public meetings convened by energetic organizers like the countess; and he was almost stone deaf, an ailment which was greatly to his advantage in view of the speeches he had to listen to.

"What's this I read about some fella goin' to steal your necklace?" he mumbled, as he shakily spooned his soup.

"It wouldn't do you any good if I told you, you dithering old buzzard," said the countess with a gracious smile.

"Oh yes. Mm. Ha. Extraordinary."

She was immune to the undercurrents of excitement that ebbed and flowed through the room like leakages of static electricity. Her only emotion was a slight anxiety lest the Saint should cheat her, after all, by simply staying away. After all the build-up, that would certainly leave her holding the bag. But it would bring him no profit, and leave him deflated on his own boast at the same time; it was im-

possible to believe that he would be satisfied with such a cheap anti-climax as that.

What else he could do and hope to get away with, on the other hand, was something that she had flatly given up trying to guess. Unless he had gone sheerly cuckoo, he couldn't hope to steal so much as a spoon that night, after his intentions had been so widely and openly proclaimed, without convicting himself on his own confession. And yet the Saint had so often achieved things that seemed equally impossible that she had to stifle a reluctant eagerness to see what his uncanny ingenuity would devise. Whatever that might be, the satisfaction of her curiosity could cost her nothing—for one very good reason. The Saint might have been able to accomplish the apparently impossible before, but he would literally have to perform a miracle if he was to open the vaults of the Vandrick National Bank. For that was where her diamond necklace lay that night and where it had lain ever since he paid his first call on her. The string she had been wearing ever since was a first-class imitation, worth about five hundred dollars. That was her answer to all the fanfaronading and commotion—a precaution so obvious and elementary that no one else in the world seemed to have thought of it, so flawless and unassailable that the Saint's boast was exploded before he even began, so supremely ridiculously simple that it would make the whole earth quake with laughter when the story broke.

Even so, ratcheted notch after notch by the lurking fear of a fiasco, tension crept up on her as the time went by without a sign of the Saint's elegant slender figure and tantalizing blue eyes. He was not there for the dinner or the following speeches, nor did he show up during the interval while some of the tables were being whisked away from the main ballroom to make room for the dancing. The dancing started without him, went on through long-drawn expectancy while impatient questions leapt at the countess spasmodically from time to time like shots from ambush.

"He'll come," she insisted monotonously, while news photographers roamed restively about with their fingers aching on the triggers of their flashlights.

At midnight the Saint arrived. No one knew how he got in; no one had seen him before; but suddenly he was there. The only announcement of his arrival was when the music stopped abruptly in the middle of a bar. Not all at once, but gradually, in little groups, the dancers shuffled to stillness, become frozen to the floor as the first instinctive turning of eyes towards the orchestra platform steered other eyes in the same direction.

He stood in the center of the dais, in front of the microphone. No one had a moment's doubt that

it was the Saint, although his face was masked. The easy poise of his athletic figure in the faultlessly tailored evening clothes was enough introduction, combined with the careless confidence with which he stood there, as if he had been a polished master of ceremonies preparing to make a routine announcement. The two guns he held, one in each hand, their muzzles shifting slightly over the crowd, seemed a perfectly natural part of his costume."

"May I interrupt for a moment, ladies and gentlemen?" he said. He spoke quietly but the loudspeakers made his voice audible in every corner of the room. Nobody moved or made any answer. His question was rather superfluous. He *had* interrupted, and everyone's ears were strained for what he had to say. "This is a holdup," he went on in the same easy conversational tone. "You've all been expecting it, so none of you should have heart failure. Until I've finished, none of you may leave the room—a friend of mine is at the other end of the hall to help to see that this order is carried out."

A sea of heads screwed round to where a shorter, stockier man in evening clothes that seemed too tight for him, stood blocking the far entrance, also masked and also with two guns in his hands. "So long as you all do exactly what you're told, I promise that nobody will get hurt. You two"—one of his guns flicked towards the countess's bodyguards, who were standing stiff-fingered where they had been caught when they saw him—"come over here. Turn your backs, take out your guns slowly and drop them on the floor."

His voice was still quiet and matter-of-fact but both the men obeyed like automatons. "O.K. Now turn around and kick them towards me... That's fine. You can stay where you are, and don't try to be heroes if you want to live to boast about it."

A smile touched his lips under the mask. He pocketed one of his guns and picked up a black bag from the dais and tossed it out on the floor. Then he put a cigarette between his lips and lighted it with a match flicked on the thumbnail of the same hand. "The holdup will now proceed," he remarked affably. "The line forms on the right, and that means everybody except the waiters. Each of you will put a contribution in the bag as you pass by. Lady Instock, that's a nice pair of earrings..."

Amazed, giggling, white-faced, surly, incredulous, according to their different characters, the procession began to file by and drop different articles into the bag under his directions. There was nothing much else that they could do. Each of them felt that gently waving gun centered on his own body, balancing its bark of death against the first sign of resistance. To one red-faced man who started to bluster, a waiter said tremulously:

"Better do what he says. Tink of all da ladies. Anybody might get hit if he start shooting." His wife shed a pearl necklace and hustled him by. Most of the gathering had the same idea. Anyone who tried to be a hero would probably have been mobbed by a dozen others who had no wish to die for his glory. Nobody really thought much beyond that. This wasn't what they had expected, but they couldn't analyze their r e a c t i o n s. Their brains were too numbed to think very much.

Two brains were not numbed. One of them belonged to the chairman who had lost his glasses, adding dim-sightedness to his other failings. From where he stood he couldn't distinguish anything as small as a mask or a gun but somebody seemed to be standing up on the platform and was probably making a speech. The chairman nodded from time to time with an expression of polite interest, thinking busily about the new corn plaster that somebody had recommended to him. The other active brain belonged to the Countess Jannowicz but there seemed to be nothing useful that she could do with it. There was no encouraging feeling of enterprise to be perceived in the guests around her, no warm inducement to believe that they would respond to courageous leadership.

"Can't you see he's bluffing?" she demanded in a hoarse bleat. "He wouldn't dare to shoot!"

"I should be terrified," murmured the Saint imperturbably, without his eyes from the passing line. "Madame, that looks like a very fine emerald ring. . ."

Something inside the countess seemed to be clutching at her stomach and shaking it up and down. She had taken care to leave her own jewels in a safe place but it hadn't occurred to her to give the same advice to her guests. And now the Saint was robbing them under her nose—almost under her own roof. Social positions had been shattered overnight on slighter grounds. She grabbed the arm of a waiter who was standing near. "Send for the police, you fool!" she snarled. He looked at her and drew down the corners of his mouth in what might have been a smile or a sneer, but he made no movement.

Nobody made any movement except as the Saint directed. The countess felt as if she were in a nightmare. It was amazing to her that the holdup could have continued so long without interruption—without some waiter opening a service door and seeing what was going on, or someone outside in the hotel noticing the curious quietness and giving the alarm. But the ballroom might have been spirited away on to a desert island. The last of the obedient procession passed by the Saint and left its contribution in the bag and joined the silent staring throng of those who had already contributed. Only

the chairman and the countess had not moved—the chairman because he hadn't heard a word and didn't know what was going on.

The Saint looked at her across the room. "I've been saving Countess Jannowicz to the last," he said, "because she's the star turn that you've all been waiting for. Will you step up now, Countess?"

Fighting a tangle of emotions, but compelled by a fascination that drove her like a machine, she moved towards the platform. And the Saint glanced at the group of almost frantic photographers. "Go ahead, boys," he said kindly. "Take your pictures. It's the chance of a lifetime... Your necklace, Countess."

She stood still, raised her hands a little way, dropped them, raised them again, slowly, to her neck. Magnesium bulbs winked and splashed like a barrage of artificial lightning as she unfastened the clasp and dropped the necklace on top of the collection in the bag. "You can't get away with this," she said whitely.

"Let me show you how easy it is," said the Saint calmly. He turned his gun to the nearest man to the platform. "You, sir—would you mind closing the bag, carefully, and taking it down to my friend at the other end of the room? Thank you." He watched the bag on its way down the room until it was in the hands of the stocky man at the far entrance. "O.K., partner," he said crisply. "Scram."

As if the word had been a magical incantation, the man vanished. A kind of communal gasp like a sigh of wind swept over the assembly, as if the final unarguable physical disappearance of their property had squeezed the last long-held breath out of their bodies. Every eye had been riveted on it in its last journey through their midst, every eye dragged itself dazedly back to the platform from which those catastrophes had been dictated.

Almost to their surprise, the Saint was still standing there. But his other gun had disappeared and he had taken his mask off. In some way, the aura of subtle command that had clung to him before in spite of his easy casualness had gone, leaving the easy casualness alone. He was still smiling. For an instant the two bodyguards were paralyzed. And then with muffled choking noises they made a concerted dive for their guns. The Saint made no move except a slight deprecating motion of the hand that held his cigarette. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said into the microphone, "I must now make my apologies, and an explanation."

The bodyguards straightened up, with their guns held ready. And yet something in his quiet voice, unarmed as he was, gripped them in spite of themselves, as it had gripped everyone else in the room. They looked questioningly towards the countess. She gave them no re-

sponse. She was rigid, watching the Saint with the first icy grasp of an impossible premonition closing in on her.

Somehow the Saint was going to get away with it. She knew it with a horrible certainty, even while she was wildly trying to guess what he would say. He could never have been so insane as to believe that he could pull a public holdup like that without being arrested an hour after he left the hotel, unless he had had some trick up his sleeve to immobilize the hue and cry. And she knew that she was now going to hear the trick she had not thought of.

"You have just been the victims of a holdup," he was saying. "Probably to nearly all of you that was a novel experience. But it is something that might happen to any of you tonight, tomorrow, at any time —so long as there are men at large to whom that seems like the best way of making a living. You came here tonight to help the National League for the Care of Incurables. That is a good and humane work. But I have taken this opportunity —with the kind co-operation of Countess Jannowicz—to make you think of another equally good, perhaps even more constructive work: the Care of Curables. I am talking about a class of whom I may know more than most of you—a section of those unfortunates who are broadly and indiscriminatingly called criminals.

"Ladies and gentlemen, not every lawbreaker is a brutalized desperado, fit only for swift extermination. I know that there are men of that kind, and you all know that I have been more merciless with them than any officer of the law. But there are others. I mean the men who steal through ignorance, through poverty, through misplaced ambition, through despair, through lack of better opportunity, I mean also men who have been punished for their crimes and who are now at the crossroads. One road takes them deeper and deeper into crime, into becoming real brutalized desperadoes. The other road takes them back to honesty, to regaining their self-respect, to becoming good and valuable citizens. All they need is the second chance which society is often so unwilling to give them. To give these men their second chance, has been founded the Society for the Rehabilitation of Delinquents—rather an elaborate name for a simple and straightforward thing. I am proud to be the first president of that society. We believe that money spent on this object is far cheaper than the money spent on keeping prisoners in jail, and at the same time is less than the damage that these men would do the community if they were left to go on with their crimes. We ask you to believe the same thing, and to be generous.

"Everything that has been taken from you tonight can be found tomorrow at the office of the Society,

which is in the Missouri Trust Building on Fifth Avenue. If you wish to leave your property there, to be sold for the benefit of the Society, we shall be grateful. If it has too great a sentimental value to you, and you wish to buy it back, we shall be glad to exchange it for a cheque. And if you object to us very seriously, and simply want it back, we shall of course have to give it back. But we hope that none of you will demand that.

"That is why we ventured to take the loot away tonight. Between now and tomorrow morning, we want you to have time to think. Think of how different this holdup would have been if it had been real. Think of your feelings when you saw your jewellery vanishing out of that door. Think of how little difference it would really make to your lives"—he looked straight at the countess—"if you were wearing imitation stones, while the money that has been locked up idly in the real ones was set free to do good and useful work. Think, ladies and gentlemen, and forgive us the melodramatic way in which we have tried to bring home our point."

He stepped back, and there was a moment of complete silence. The chairman had at last found his glasses. He saw the speaker retiring with a bow from the microphone. Apparently the speech was over. It seemed to be the chairman's place to give the conventional lead. He raised his hands and clapped loudly. It is things like that that turn tides and start revolutions. In another second the whole hall was clattering with hysterical applause.

"My dear, how *do* you think of these things—?" "The most *divinely* thrilling—" "I was really *petrified* . . ."

The Countess Jannowicz wriggled dazedly free from the shrill jabber of compliments, managed somehow to snatch the Saint out of a circle of clamorous women of which Lady Instock was the most gushing leader. In a comparatively quiet corner of the room she faced him. "You're a good organizer, Mr. Templar. The head waiter tells me that Mr. Ullbaum telephoned this afternoon and told the staff how they were to behave during the holdup."

He was cheerfully appreciative. "I must remember to thank him."

"Mr. Ullbaum did no such thing."

He smiled. "Then he must have been impersonated. But the damage seems to be done."

"You know that for all your talking you've still committed a crime?"

"I think you'd be rather a lonely prosecutor."

Rage had made her a little incoherent. "I shall not come to your office. You've made a fool of yourself. My necklace is in the bank—"

"Countess," said the Saint patiently, "I'd guessed that much.

That's why I want you to be sure and bring me the real one. Lady Instock is going to leave her earrings and send a cheque as well, and all the rest of your friends seem to be sold on the idea. You're supposed to be the number one patron. What would they think of you if after all the advertising you let yourself out with a five-hundred-dollar string of cut glass?"

"I can disclaim—"

"I know you can. But your name will still be mud. Whereas at the moment you're tops. Why not make the best of it and charge it to publicity?"

She knew she was beaten—that he had simply turned a trick with the cards that for days past she had been busily forcing into his hand. But she still fought with the bitterness of futility. "I'll have the police investigate this phony charity—"

"They'll find that it's quite legally constituted, and so long as the funds last they'll be administered with perfect good faith."

"And who'll get the benefit of them besides yourself?"

Simon smiled once again. "Our first and most urgent case will be a fellow named Marty O'Connor. He helped me with the collection tonight. You ought to remember him—he was your chauffeur for three weeks. Anyone like yourself, Countess," said the Saint rather cruelly, "ought to know that charity begins at home."

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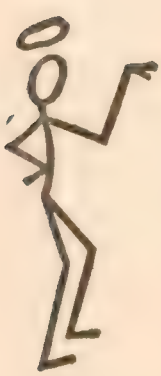
## *NEXT MONTH--*



THE APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES
by AGATHA CHRISTIE

SPIRIT OF THE BLACK HAWK by SAX ROHMER

BAIT FOR A MAN-TRAP
by LAWRENCE G. BLOCHMAN

BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS by HAL ELLSON

REWARD FOR MURDER by JAMES M. FOX

BEZIQUE OF DEATH by VERONICA PARKER JOHNS

UPROAR IN ACHERON by PHILIP JOSE FARMER

BIG STEAL by FRANK KANE

*-in the May issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE*

# death among the geraniums

*by... William O'Farrell*

MARCIA BOGART was tall, blonde and elegant in appearance. She occupied, with her cat Andrea, one of two apartments into which the stable on a large walled estate had been converted, and she held no job longer than was necessary to insure continuance of her weekly checks from the California State Bureau of Employment.

The estate on which Marcia lived was situated on a bluff above the Pacific Ocean a few miles north of Malibu. It, together with a number of other valuable properties, belonged to Mrs. Elizabeth Thurmond. Elizabeth was a widow and Marcia, although she managed to conceal the fact, detested her.

This feeling stemmed from a number of—to Marcia—natural causes. She was attractive, intelligent but poor. Elizabeth was dowdy and dull, but her fortune had been reliably estimated at two and a half million dollars. Elizabeth had four dogs, gigantic and unfriendly animals who, had they not been kept securely penned, would have shredded Marcia's beloved Andrea to bloody tatters. They were so savage that only Elizabeth and the milkman, who bred Airdales, could approach them safely. The wire enclosure

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*William O'Farrell, author of CAUSEWAY TO THE PAST, GROW YOUNG TO DIE, THE DEVIL IS DUE, etc., and the recent WETBACK and GYPSO GO HOME (Gold Medal) explores the mind of a determined woman who realizes she can make use of this man who has an obvious respect for a quick buck and is completely indifferent as to how he gets hold of one.*

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which contained their runway and living quarters was near the big iron gates of the estate, and they stayed inside it except when Elizabeth took them down to her private beach for exercise. She usually did this the first thing in the morning, and while the dogs were loose Marcia and Andrea had to stay locked up in the apartment.

But Elizabeth's most hateful fault was that she loved to talk, aimlessly and endlessly. For lack of someone else, she talked to Marcia; and Marcia—consistently behind in her rent—was a captive audience. She listened restlessly, but she listened and she learned. She learned more about her landlady than the latter realized she was divulging.

For example:

"Being a widow is a lonely occupation," Elizabeth said on one occasion. And on another, "Henry Fisher's such a nice-looking young man, don't you think?" she asked.

These two apparently unrelated remarks had started Marcia thinking. Her thinking gave birth to an idea and this, in turn, produced a plan. The plan called for the co-operation of Henry Fisher and, in order to secure this, she saw that it would be necessary to make him fall in love with her. She accomplished this easily by using the most obvious of methods— Henry being not particularly subtle—in less than a week.

He was Elizabeth's other tenant and Marcia's next-door neighbor. A flashily handsome used-car salesman, he was lean and nervously vital and he had feral light-green eyes. He also had an ingrained respect for a quick buck and was relatively indifferent as to how he happened to get hold of one. Marcia confided part of her plan to him on the eighth night after its conception.

They were walking through the two hundred yards of geranium beds that hygienically separated Elizabeth's big white house from their apartments. Coming to a stone bench, she sat down and permitted him to kiss her. When he was in a properly receptive mood she told him as much as—and no more than—it would be necessary for him at that time to know.

It was still not sufficiently elementary for Henry. "I don't get it, baby. Why should I make love to Elizabeth when I'm in love with you?"

"And I love you, Henry," Marcia said, "but neither of us has any money. She has lots."

"She's old!"

"And very lonely. She has no relatives. She and her husband spent most of their time in Europe, and she has no friends. Don't you feel sorry for her?"

"No."

"You like her, don't you?"

"I don't know. Never thought about it."

"You ought to. And while you're thinking," Marcia told him, "just remember this. The only way

you'll ever make a lot of money is by marrying it."

"Mary Elizabeth?" Henry shook his head. "You're dreaming, baby."

"Not at all. With my help, I think there's a good chance that you might swing the deal."

Henry was silent for a moment. "What kind of help are you talking about?" he asked thoughtfully.

"Information, Henry." Marcia smiled complacently. "Elizabeth tells me what she likes and doesn't like, and why. She likes you already. If you were sweet to her she'd like you more."

"Enough to marry me?"

Marcia nodded. "Yes."

Henry got up. He took a couple of steps and turned back slowly. "Suppose she did. That doesn't mean she'd just hand over all her money. You got plans for after the wedding?"

"Of course. But it might be better if you didn't know them yet. Why are you frowning?"

"I still don't get it. You say you love me but you're trying to marry me off to another woman. Where do you come in?"

"I come in later. You don't have to stay married forever," Marcia said.

Meanwhile, and for some time afterwards, the lady whose future they had been discussing went with reasonable happiness about her daily business. Elizabeth Thurmond fixed her own meals and cleaned the three rooms she actually used of the big house in which she lived. A long line of inefficient servants had convinced her that it was really simpler to do the work herself. She talked to Marcia and the milkman, walked the dogs, and was flattered by the increasingly pressing attentions of Henry Fisher. With Marcia calling the signals, Henry's courtship had gotten off to a good start.

It continued to go well. Her husband's death had left a vacancy in Elizabeth's life which Henry gradually learned to fill. Never a good driver, she was afraid of the heavy traffic on the Coast Highway. He became her chauffeur-companion, taking her to market in the late morning and often having lunch with her at some good restaurant on the beach. Elizabeth disliked eating alone and, alone or in company, Henry liked to eat. His commissions dwindled but occasionally she gave him small presents which made up for his decreased income. It was a mutually satisfactory arrangement and Henry was surprised to find that he was enjoying it.

"You know," he said to Marcia, "the old girl's not a complete square, after all. You wouldn't think it but she's got an off-beat sense of humor. Yesterday—"

"I'm not interested in her sense of humor," Marcia interrupted. "Only in her money. Keep your mind on what you're doing."

"It would be easier to do that," he muttered, "if I got to see you alone once in a while."

"We're alone now."

"That's what I mean. We're alone," he said, "but are we acting like two people that are supposed to be in love? All you do is criticize me, give me orders like as if you think I'm stupid."

"The word is pronounced *stew-pid*. It isn't *stoopid*," Marcia said. "Elizabeth commented on what she called you 'unfortunate manhandling of English' the other day. It's the little things that count, Henry. Like smoking. She's afraid she's getting asthma. You'll have to give up cigarettes."

Henry protested, but he gave them up. He gave up many cherished habits and painfully acquired new ones that he didn't like. He even discarded his favorite sports jacket, a wide-shouldered brown creation with small red checks. Before Elizabeth, through Marcia, had finished with him his whole outward personality had been changed. But one thing he would or could not do. He could not even pretend to like the dogs. He was mortally afraid of them, and titillated himself by teasing them when Elizabeth was not at home.

Marcia caught him doing it one morning. He was poking at them through the wire with a fishing pole. The dogs were in the advanced stage of fury that precludes barking. Henry tittered nervously as, snarling, they threw themselves against the wire.

"You idiot!" She came up from behind and snatched the pole away. "If Elizabeth saw you doing that she'd never speak to you again!"

"How can she see me if she isn't here?"

"The biggest one has cut himself on the wire. She can see the blood. Are you deliberately trying to ruin everything?"

"I don't know what you're so upset about. I only—"

"Don't you dare come near this pen again," she said.

So Henry stopped teasing the dogs, and in time Marcia's program showed signs of being ready to pay off. Four months after they had started working on Elizabeth, Marcia gave Henry the signal to start the countdown.

"Tomorrow's the day," she told him. "I'm putting champagne in the picnic basket and you'll have a pint of cognac. I suggest a ratio of three to one."

He and Elizabeth picnicked next afternoon in a secluded spot in the mountains above Malibu. It was spring and there was still water in the brook beside which they spread their tablecloth. There was no smog. The weather was sparkling. The sandwiches were tasty and Henry allowed a full hour for the discomforts of digestion before he gave Elizabeth another drink and took her slightly liver-spotted hand.

"Elizabeth dear," he said, speaking the opening words of a speech that had been carefully rehearsed, "has it ever occurred to you how much we have in common? We

share a love of nature, of the less expensive, more meaningful things of life. But most important, I think, is that we're both so terribly alone. We need each other. Will you marry me?"

She shivered gently. "I'm older than you, Henry. Old enough to—"

"My love for you is ageless." Inspired by the sound of his own voice, he ventured an ad lib. "If that sounds corny, sue me. So help me, I mean just what I say."

Her hand trembled, then closed firmly on his hand. "I don't want to sue you, Henry. I'd rather marry you," she said.

They were married by a judge after his traffic court had closed up for the day. The bride wore lavender, a small corsage and a new permanent. Marcia and the clerk of the court witnessed the simple ceremony. Elizabeth had supplied her groom with a fifty-dollar bill in an unsealed envelope. Henry switched bills and gave the judge five dollars. The judge did not kiss the bride.

So Mrs. Elizabeth Thurmond became Mrs. Henry Fisher, and the first part of Marcia's program reached its successful end. It was time now for the second part. She waited a couple of weeks before meeting Henry one evening, by appointment, in the middle of the geraniums.

He tried to kiss her but she drew away. "We mustn't, Henry. You're married now," she said.

"Well, sure—! Wasn't that the whole idea?"

"Not the whole idea. Only half of it," she corrected him. "How do you like the connubial state?"

"What's that?"

"Being married."

"Oh! Well, funny thing," he said. "I got only one complaint. Here I am sitting on top of the mint, but if I want two-bits I got to ask for it."

"You don't have to ask for money. Take it," Marcia said.

"Believe me, if I knew how to get it I'd help myself to some."

"To some? Why not take it all—and me as well?"

Henry looked at her, then looked away. They were sitting on the stone bench, and he studied the toe of his right shoe. He got up presently, glanced cautiously over his shoulder at the big white house.

"You mean you'd—marry me? I mean," he stammered, "that is, if it was possible."

In the darkness he could not see her smile. "I would, Henry. And it can be made possible."

"How?"

"Let's walk over to the beach steps," Marcia said.

These were on one side of the house: a long, steep stairway that descended to a pile of boulders on the sand. Marcia led him down half a dozen steps before she stopped. Unlike most California houses, this one was old enough to have a cellar. A cellar window

was on Marcia's left and level with the step on which she stood.

"Elizabeth brings the dogs down here every morning," she said quietly. She sat on the step and felt with her right hand below it and on its side. "Now, if someone —this is purely hypothetical, mind you—if someone were to drive a nail in here and loop a light wire around it, and then stood inside the cellar holding the other end of the wire, he'd be in a position to let the dogs run past. They're always so wild to get to the beach that they go on ahead. But just before Elizabeth came by, this person—"

"Hypothetical person," Henry nervously corrected her.

Marcia was tired of fooling. "We both know what I mean. If you or I—and frankly I don't trust your nerve; I'd better do it—if, standing inside the cellar, I were to lift the wire and hang on tight—what would happen?"

"She'd trip, fall down the steps, land on those rocks and split her head."

"Exactly. Then all I'd have to do would be to flip the wire loose while you went running to her help. But of course," Marcia added, "she'd be beyond help by that time, wouldn't she?"

"Well, let's say that she'd be so banged up that nobody would notice a few extra dents. You expect me to make those extra dents? No deal. I don't like it, Marcia."

"Do you like me?"

"You know I'm crazy for you."

"And I for you. And this is the only way we can have each other. We've got to do it, Henry. We don't have any choice."

He sighed, and presently he shrugged. "Tell me what to do."

"You get the wire and set the nail in the right place," she said. "I'll be on the job early in the morning before Elizabeth's out of bed."

"How will you get into the cellar?"

"She leaves her keys in the washing machine whenever she goes out. I have duplicates that'll fit every lock on the place."

"I still don't like it, baby. If anything goes wrong—"

"Just do as I tell you and nothing will go wrong," she said.

Marcia was at her post at seven-thirty in the morning. She held one end of a thin wire that was tightly stretched across a step of the beach stairs, the sixth step from the top. She was outwardly calm but perspiration trickled down her forehead, kept getting in her eyes. Faintly, at about ten minutes before nine, she heard voices, Elizabeth's and Henry's. They were standing near the head of the stairs and they were arguing. She could catch only one word out of three or four, but it was enough to tell what they were arguing about.

"...always...dogs...this time..." That was Henry.

". . .hot today. . .market. . .you drive. . ." Elizabeth said.

"No."

". . .not?"

". . .fed up. . .beach?"

". . .cooler. . .please?"

"Nuts," Henry said.

Then, clear and incisive, Elizabeth's voice came down the steps and through the window. "You're a spoiled, ungrateful boy. I'm disappointed in you, Henry."

A car door slammed. A motor roared, then faded into silence. Marcia flipped the wire loose and reeled it in. She climbed the cellar steps, opened a door and stepped out into sunlight.

Henry was standing in the driveway. His face was red. It got redder when he saw Marcia. "You hear what she said?"

Marcia nodded.

"For months she walks the dogs every morning. Now, the one morning I'm counting on her, she goes to the market—and *she's* the one who's disappointed!"

"Never mind. We'll try again tomorrow."

"Tomorrow's twenty-four hours away. Don't know if I can stick it. I got no sleep last night."

Marcia grabbed his shirt and pulled him toward her. "You'll stick it. You have to. I intend to have that money. Understand?"

"Oh, sure. Sure I understand. You don't have to be so mean about it, do you?" Henry said.

She released him, went to her apartment and fed Andrea. An hour later she saw Henry walking down the driveway toward the gates. Worried, she ran after him.

"Where are you going?" she called.

He had almost reached the gates. He stopped and turned. "For the mail. Why?"

She caught up with him. "You're not to tease those dogs!"

"Now look here, Marcia! Don't be telling me—"

A man's voice, a stranger's, interrupted. "Mr. Fisher?"

Two uniformed deputy sheriffs had come unnoticed through the gate.

Henry frowned. "That's me."

"Mrs. Fisher's son?"

"Her husband."

"Oh!" the deputy who was doing the talking said. "Bad news, Mr. Fisher. Your wife plowed her car into a truck this side of Malibu."

"She hurt bad?"

"Sorry to have to tell you this. She's dead."

Marcia gasped. Henry's mouth fell open.

"Well, what do you know? What *do* you know," he said.

Elizabeth was buried in Forest Lawn. There were only three mourners. Henry and Marcia, of course, and Elizabeth's attorney, a Mr. Ferguson Conrad. After the funeral, Mr. Conrad had a few minutes alone with Henry. As Henry drove her back to Malibu, Marcia asked if the lawyer had told him about the will.

Henry nodded. "It's almost like we figured."

"Almost? What are the terms?"

"I get the works, but there's a stipulation. That means a catch. I got to keep the dogs. If I give 'em away or poison 'em like I'd like to, I get nothing. I get nothing anyway, except the income from a trust fund, until they're dead—like Conrad puts it—of natural causes. If I die before they do, whoever takes care of 'em becomes something called a sole beneficiary. Those damn animals will live for years."

Marcia said thoughtfully. "You'll just have to put up with them, and they with you. How much of an income will you get?"

"Two thousand lousy bucks a month."

"Not too bad. I can live nicely on half of that. And when the dogs die I'll be able to live much better. After our wedding—"

"Please, Marcia! I just buried one wife. This is hardly the time to talk about marrying again," Henry said.

Marcia waited a week before she returned to the subject. Helping Henry feed the dogs one evening, she said, "You're right. Maybe we should let a little time go by. We can get married in September. That would be in better taste, don't you agree?"

"A little better. And since we're talking about letting time go by, your rent is four days overdue. Not that I'm trying to pressure you," he added hastily. "It's just that we ought to keep this on a business basis. Good taste, like you said."

Marcia stared at him incredulously. Henry was disconcerted by her eyes. Shoving a pan of meat beneath the wire, he extended his hand too far inside the pan. Marcia thought it was the meat at which the dogs snapped, but Henry believed it was his hand. He further believed himself to have been cruelly bitten on the wrist, although Marcia was sure that he had only cut himself on the wire while jerking his hand back. Either way, the noise he made topped the din set up by the dogs. He was literally sick with shock and fear. Marcia helped him to the house, put antiseptic on his wrist and bandaged it.

"No need for a doctor. You'll recover," she said unfeelingly. "If that is a bite you certainly had it coming. No wonder the dogs hate you."

"They don't hate me any worse than I hate them."

"Oh, forget the dogs! Let's try to be constructive. Do you still want to marry me?"

"Marcia, I'm in agony! Right now that's all I can think about."

"Very well. I'll give you until this time tomorrow. But I warn you, Henry—you'll have to stop this stalling. I'm fed up with fiddling around."

Henry stayed up late that night. After she had gone, he

started worrying. The realization that he no longer loved Marcia had come upon him gradually and was the result of her unrelenting bossiness. He was determined not to marry her, but he knew that Marcia was resourceful and he could not foresee what devilish means she might employ to force him into a wedding against his will. By two in the morning, worry had driven him into such a state that he saw her as a personal nemesis who would leave him no peace of mind until she had been removed. And not being an inventive man, the only method of removing her that he could think of was an imitative one. He decided to try it. Half an hour after reaching this decision he went to bed.

Marcia had finished her own preparations and gone to bed hours before. She had smiled before she fell asleep.

The following day she stayed in her apartment, watching TV and playing with the cat. She went out only once. When Henry had driven through the gates on his way to the market, she walked quickly to the wire enclosure, stayed there only a few seconds and immediately returned. Henry came back an hour later and she watched him carry packages into the house. She saw him again at dusk. He was coming through the geraniums bringing food to the dogs. She met him on the driveway and they walked together toward the pen. At sight of Henry the dogs started a ferocious howling. The tail of Marcia's cat stood straight up. It brushed against her leg.

"Go home, Andrea darling. I don't want my precious frightened," Marcia said.

The cat paid no attention. Marcia smiled at it affectionately. "Cats are the only really intelligent animals. They're utterly self-centered," she said to Henry. "Are you ready to talk now?" she asked.

"Why, sure! Tell you what," he said with surface heartiness. "I brought home some cold cuts and a bottle of good wine. We can have supper on the beach. You go ahead—"

"—and you'll meet me there and then we'll talk? No thanks, Henry," she broke in. "We'll talk now. What did you say?" she asked, hearing him mutter inarticulately.

"I can't talk here!" Henry's plan had miscarried; he was angry. "I can't even think here. The dogs make too much noise."

"Then I'll talk. There's just two months between now and Labor Day. We'll drive to Las Vegas for the long weekend."

"And get married?"

"What else?" They had almost reached the enclosure. Marcia had to raise her voice to be heard.

"Lots else!" he shouted. "I don't like Vegas and I don't like Labor Day. In short, I don't like the idea of getting married."

"You have nothing to say about it." Marcia's face remained impassive. "I intend to have my half of

Elizabeth's estate, and there's only one way of making sure I'll get it. You promised—"

"I promised nothing. Even if I did, it wouldn't mean anything because the promise was—what's that word?—contingent. It was contingent on your promise to get rid of Elizabeth. You didn't do that. Poor Elizabeth was the victim of her own bad driving. Our verbal contract's null and void."

"Where did you learn those new words, Henry? Contingent—verbal contract—null and void?"

"Elizabeth was a smart business woman. She taught me a few things."

"Like how to welch out on a gentlemen's agreement?"

"I never pretended to be a gentleman."

They had reached the pen. One dog was barking at Henry, a second at the cat, and the other two were clamoring to be fed. Marcia stood beside the padlocked door. She watched Henry bending over to shove tin plates beneath the wire. "No, you're no gentleman," she said quietly. "You're a heel, aren't you? A real low-down slob."

Henry pushed the first of four plates underneath the wire. The remaining three he held in his left hand. "I'm what I always was," he said, "and so are you."

"You're quite right," Marcia agreed. Standing on Henry's left and a little behind him, she removed the padlock—unlocked that morning with one of her duplicate keys—from its hasp. She opened the pen door and gave the stooping Henry a strong push. He landed inside the wire enclosure on his face. The tin plates flew from his hand. The dogs hesitated between him and the food, then ran to the far end of their cage and began to eat.

Marcia slammed the door and snapped the padlock as Henry scrambled to his feet. He pounded on the door.

"Let me out!" he screamed. "They'll kill me! Let me out!"

"I won't let them kill you. Not quite," Marcia told him. "You wouldn't be much use to me if you were dead."

"Please, baby! Marcia, please! They'll jump as soon as they finish eating. You want me to marry you? Okay, just let me out!"

"You'll marry me, all right. You won't be able to help yourself," Marcia said. "The condition you'll be in, you'll need nursing. I'll nurse you. I guarantee you won't get well until we're married. You ready for them? Here they come!"

Henry took one horrified look behind him. The tin plates were empty. The dogs had stepped across them. They approached him slowly, growling in their throats. They all sprang at the same instant. Henry screamed again and threw himself against the door. The combined weight of five bodies, human and canine, tore loose the padlocked hasp. The door banged open, knocking Marcia

back. Henry fell against her and knocked her down. He fell beside her. The dogs ran over both of them and chased the cat.

"Andrea! Oh, my poor darling!" Marcia's cry was anguished. She got up and hurried after the dogs.

Henry saw them running through the geraniums. It was still light enough to watch their rapid progress to the far end of the garden, and from there to the beach stairs. The cat went down them first, then the dogs and finally Marcia. Henry heard her yell of terror. After that, there was nothing to be heard except the far-off baying of the dogs.

He got to his feet, walked up the driveway to the house. From the top of the beach stairs he saw Marcia lying on the boulders down below. The impossible angle at which her head was thrown back made it unnecessary for him to descend. He climbed down the stairs only as far as the sixth step from the top.

There, he flipped from its nail the wire he had looped around it the night before. Original or not, the plan had worked; and, as he climbed the steps again, he thought how neatly Marcia had been trapped by her own cleverness. If she hadn't suggested killing poor Elizabeth that way, he never would have thought of it himself. It was quite dark now. He had reached the top of the stairs when again he heard the dogs.

They were halfway up the steps, were coming silently and with deadly purpose. He started to run. He made it to the middle of the geraniums before he tripped and split his head on the stone bench.

The milkman found him in the morning. He left him there, walked thoughtfully toward the house. On his way, from the top of the beach stairs, he saw Marcia. He went inside and phoned the police.

"They're both dead. Looks like the girl fell down the stairs and broke her neck. Fisher's head's cracked open. Must have been running and got his feet tangled in—a funny thing to trip on in a garden—a length of wire. Sure, I'll wait here," he said.

He went outside, whistled for the dogs and locked them in their pen. The hasp was broken but he knew that he'd have time to fix it before the cops arrived.

Working, he wondered what would happen to the dogs. Maybe they'd let him take them. They were good dogs—barked a lot and acted savage but actually they were gentle—and it wouldn't hurt to ask. And it wouldn't cost a lot to feed them. He could swing it by cutting his own expenses a little here and there.

The milkman didn't know that he was on his way to becoming the sole beneficiary of Elizabeth's will and that he practically had two and a half millions dollars in the bank.

# tears of evil

*by... Craig Rice*

IT WAS, John J. Malone decided, a most satisfactory party. For one thing, George and Kathy Weston had invited only a few people to help them celebrate their crystal wedding anniversary; and, for another, none of the guests had yet expressed amazement over his personal taste in beverages. Straight gin with a beer chaser had never seemed an unusual combination to him, and it was a relief not to hear it referred to in incredulous tones by people who didn't know what they were missing.

Malone bit the end off a cigar, lit it, and inhaled it deeply. Fifteen years married, he thought. A long time. And it couldn't happen to two nicer people than George and Kathy.

He had stationed himself by the table on which the liquor had been set out, and now, as he glanced round the Westons' luxurious living-room, he discovered with some surprise that he was alone. Then he heard laughter from the direction of the kitchen: and now the question was, should he stay here and guard the liquor, or should he go out to the kitchen and join the others?

He had no choice, of course. He

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*Much has been written about Chicago and the world which John J. Malone knows — a very special world, perhaps, but which is still very much like the city and the world we all know. But few have gone on to point out that this was also the world which Craig Rice herself knew — and was part of ..*

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leaned his hip against the liquor table, sighed, and broke the seal on a fresh bottle of gin. To stand guard duty properly, a man needed strength.

The clear liquid had just reached the brim of his glass when Malone glanced up and saw George Weston coming towards him from the direction of the stairs. There was something about George's handsome, flat-planed face that, somehow, made Malone forget his drink. He put the glass and cigar down slowly, while a strange tenseness stiffened his short body and tightened the muscles across his stomach. George was walking towards him as if every step was an effort, as if he were half drunk. But he was not drunk, Malone knew. George Weston was a teetotaller. And yet he was walking across his own living-room almost as if he were lost in it.

When he was within a few feet of Malone, George stopped. His eyes came up to meet Malone's.

'Malone', he whispered. 'Malone ...for God's sake...'

Malone pushed away from the table and stepped close to his friend. He'd seen men in shock, and in hysteria; he'd seen men in most of the ways a man can be—but he'd never seen anyone with the expression that George Weston wore now. The nearest thing to it had been the look on the face of a punch-drunk prize-fighter he had watched, an instant before the fighter went down from a knock-out punch.

'Damn it, George', he said sharply. 'What's wrong with you?' He put both hands on George's shoulders and shook him. 'What's wrong?'

George wet his lips. 'It's Kathy', he said. 'She's—' He looked at Malone, and his lips moved, but there was no sound.

Malone shook him again. 'She's *what?* Speak up, George!'

'She's. . .dead.'

The floor beneath Malone's feet seemed to tilt, and for an instant George Weston's face blurred out of focus. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly, and the word dead sickened through him...

George's eyes moved slowly towards the stairs and back again.

'She's upstairs', he said. 'Malone, she's...'

Malone's fingers came up to tighten round George's arm. 'Come on', he said. He tugged George round and headed him towards the stairs.

'Where is she?' Malone asked.

'In her bedroom. She isn't just dead, Malone. She's—she's been murdered.'

'George, you'r out of your mind!'

George shook his head. They started up the stairs. 'No', George said. 'Somebody's killed her. Somebody's killed my wife.'

Malone caught his lower lip in his teeth, and said nothing. Of all the people he knew, George and Kathy were two of the ones he'd

liked the best. If Kathy was dead, then a little part of him had died too. Kathy. Lovely, gracious Kathy...

At the top of the stairs, George turned to the right and stopped before the second door. 'In there, Malone', he said hoarsely.

Malone twisted the knob and stepped inside. It was a large room, bright and infinitely feminine. It was in perfect order, and even the bottles on Kathy's vanity seemed to have been arranged in some whimsical order of her own.

Malone took in the entire room at a glance. He turned quickly to George. 'Where is she?'

'On—on the other side of the bed', George said. 'On the floor.'

Malone went round the bed fast. Kathy lay on her back, the blue-black waves of her long hair in contrast vividly with the smooth white arm thrown out behind her head. One slim ankle was crossed over the other, and above them her stockinged legs tapered up to swelling thighs. A sheet had been spread over the body from shoulders to hips, but it took Malone no second glance to know that, except for the sheet, and her shoes and stockings, she was completely naked.

She was beautiful in death. It was, Malone thought, almost as if she were sleeping. He put his hand over her heart and held it there until he was convinced.

He looked up at George Weston. Very softly, he said, 'How?'

George had remained near the door, but now he closed it behind him and took two tentative steps towards Malone. 'Her neck's broken', he said thickly.

Malone put his fingertips to the back of Kathy's head and moved them slowly downward. He felt the break, the small bump where there should be no bump.

He got to his feet and stood very still, looking at George.

'You touch her?'

'I put the sheet over her.'

'And what else?'

'I straightened her head. It was all...' His shoulders slumped and he put a hand out to the foot of the bed as if for support. 'I couldn't stand to see her look that way.'

Malone nodded. 'Sure, George', he said.

George turned and pulled the bench out from the vanity and sat down. Malone walked to the window and stood staring out into the night. He would have gone through a thousand hells to be able to help George Weston now. But there was nothing he could do for him, and nothing he could say to make it any easier for him.

George was speaking now, almost as if to himself. 'I loved her. Nobody will ever know how much I loved her.'

Malone cleared his throat. 'George, isn't it about time we called the police?'

George nodded. 'Yes. I guess so, Malone.' His eyes were sick. 'This

was our anniversary. It was fifteen years today.'

Malone felt an utter hopelessness that was alien to him. In most situations, he knew what to do, and how to do it. But not this time. His grief was not as great as George's, of course, but it was profound.

'I hate to ask this, George', he said gently. 'But have you got any ideas? It had to be one of your guests. You know that.'

George was silent a long moment. Then, 'No, Malone. It couldn't have been. Everybody loved her. There's never been anybody like her, Malone. Everybody...'

Malone tried to get a stern tone into his voice, but he failed. His words came out as gently as before. 'You found her without any clothes on? Where are they?'

'Under the bed', George said. 'They were in a heap beside her, but I pushed them under the bed. I don't know why. I guess I just didn't want anybody to know what had happened to her.'

Quickly then, Malone went round the bed once more and bent down. The dress Kathy had worn earlier was in tatters, and her underclothing had obviously been ripped from her body. Malone dropped them to the floor and went back to lean against the wall near George Weston.

'Killing her wasn't enough', George said. 'They had to do *that*, too.'

For the first time in several minutes, Malone felt as if he was capable of coherent thought.

'George,' he said, 'I'll promise you something. Except for you, no one thought more of Kathy than I did. I'm going to find out who killed her, George—if it takes me the rest of my life.'

'You can't bring her back', George said dully. 'Nobody can do that.'

'No. But we can find out who did it. It had to be somebody downstairs, George. Now, can you think of anyone who might have any reason at all to want to...' He paused. 'Think hard, George.'

George shook his head. 'No. Nobody.' His face was very white. 'I can't stay in here any longer, Malone. I— I've got to have some air. I feel sick.'

'Sure', Malone said. 'We'll go down the back stairs.'

As they walked between the trees in the huge back lawn, John J. Malone, for once, kept his silence. He was thinking back a good many years, back to the first time he had seen George and Kathy Weston.

There had been a carnival on the outskirts of Chicago that year, and one of the feature attractions was the Cage of Death. Malone had watched two young daredevils wheel a pair of motorcycles into a giant globe fashioned of steel mesh. He had been across the midway at the time, and it was not until he got much closer that he discovered

one of the riders was a girl. Her companion had ridden his motorcycle in small circles round the bottom of the cage, until he had gained sufficient momentum to suspend him and his vehicle horizontally. And then, defying gravity, he had increased the speed and looped-the-loop a dozen times.

Then the girl had done the same thing. And, at the climax, both riders were at the top of the mesh sphere one moment, and at the bottom the next, both of them looping-the-loop at the same time, and in opposite directions.

Malone had never seen anything like it. He waited around, and when the young riders came out, he told them so. That was the beginning, and Malone haunted the carnival lot and the Cage of Death every night thereafter, until the carnival moved to the next town. He and the two young riders—George and Kathy—had become friends instantly. The next year, Malone had renewed the friendship. He had been watching them the night they collided head-on at the very top of the cage...

Kathy had suffered a broken arm and severe bruises, and that was all. But George had been badly mangled. During the four days when his chance of life was fifty-fifty, after the long sessions of surgery, Malone had haunted the hospital just as he had the carnival lot.

He remembered the way George had tried to smile when he told him he was all right now, but that he could never ride again, and the way Kathy had cried when George said that.

But they had saved a good deal of money, and George had started dabbling in Chicago real estate. Now, on their fifteenth wedding anniversary, they were in the upper income bracket.

They'd been one of the happiest, most devoted couples Malone had ever known. They'd kept close touch with him, and he with them, and his one sure cure for the blues was an evening with George and Kathy.

Malone g l a n c e d sideways at George. 'You feel like going back now?'

'In a minute', George said.

'We've got to call the police.'

'Yes, I know. In just a minute.'

'About these guests of yours', Malone said. 'I got their first names when you introduced me, and that's about all. Give me a quick run-down on them.'

George stopped walking. He sat down on a stone bench and shook a cigarette out of a crumpled packet. He rolled it round in his fingers absently, then suddenly broke it in two and flicked it away.

'There are four guys and three women in there', Malone said. 'Who are they, and *what* are they?'

'None of them did it', George said.

'Never mind. What about them?'

'There's Eddie Marcheck. He's the short one with the crew cut. He was a talker with the carnival

at the same time we were with it. His wife is the tall blonde. The guy with the freckles is Del Esterly. He's in insurance. He and his wife—that's the girl with the glasses—have an agency.' He shook his head. 'But there's no point in this, Malone. None of them—'

'Go on', Malone told him.

'I don't feel much like talking.'

'I know, and I'm sorry. But this is important. What about the others?'

'Well, the other couple are Mark and Jen Stevens. They're neighbours, and Mark is sales manager for a sporting goods firm down near the Loop.'

George's voice was thin and tired, and Malone was beginning to dislike himself a little for putting him through the paces at a time like this. But—it had to be.

'And the solo guy?' he asked. 'Who's he?'

George h e s i t a t e d a moment. When he spoke, his voice was scarcely audible. 'His name's McJanet', he said. 'Les McJanet. He's a guy I used to know—from school.'

Malone took a fresh cigar from his pocket and began, very slowly, to unwrap it, his eyes on George Weston. There had been a subtle change in George's voice when he spoke of McJanet, something quite apart from its sudden softness. Malone put the cigar in his mouth, unlit. Around it, he said, 'Is there something special about this guy McJanet?'

'No. Why?'

'I think there is', Malone said. 'I think there's something special about him. What is it?'

George looked up at Malone, and then moved away again hesitantly.

'He's an ex-con. He's out on parole now. I hadn't seen him in years, and then, this afternoon, I ran into him on State Street. I invited him to our anniversary party. He said he'd come, but that there was something he wanted me to know first.'

Malone bit the tip from his cigar and spat it out and glanced towards the house. 'And that's when he told you about being out on parole?'

George nodded. 'I told him it didn't make any difference. And it didn't.'

Malone stared up at the window of the bedroom where Kathy Weston lay with her neck broken and a sheet across her naked body.

'What was McJanet in for?'

George stood up and started walking back towards the house. Malone fell into step beside him.

'I didn't hear what you said', Malone prompted.

'Assault and rape', George said. 'He swore it was a frame-up.'

'And you believed him?'

'Yes, I believed him. I've known him most of my life. He couldn't do anything like that.' His tone was flat. 'And now let me alone, Malone.'

Malone drew in deeply on his cigar and said nothing.

They went in through the side door, and George started walking through the hallway to the living-room. 'Everybody seems to be in the kitchen', he said. 'I'm going to try to call the police right now.'

'Wait a minute', Malone said. 'I want to take one more look in that room.'

'Why?'

'Just a hunch. Maybe we can save the police a little work.'

George turned to look at him. His eyes were level, his voice steady. 'It isn't McJanet, and it isn't anyone else here. I know you think so, but you're wrong. Kathy went upstairs for a minute, and somebody had either sneaked in and was in the bedroom, or they got in through the side entrance while she was up there. I know that—'

'You don't know anything', Malone said sharply. 'You're in something pretty close to shock, and you can't even think. It was somebody at this party, and I know it, even if you don't.'

He caught himself. This was a hell of a way to talk to a good friend, a man whose wife had just been murdered. He knew how much George had always worshipped Kathy, how he had worked like a dog to build up his real estate business. And he knew, beyond any question, that George had never so much as looked at another woman—no more than Kathy had looked at another man. George had loved his wife with an intensity that was rare in Malone's experience, and *worshipped* was the only word to describe the way he'd felt about her.

He had loved her so much that her death had temporarily deranged him. All this talk about innocent guests came from the part of George's mind that was trying desperately to catch on to something, anything, that it could deny. His mind couldn't deny Kathy's death, but the need for denial was so great that George had somehow channelled it towards something else.

Malone tried to manage a grin for his friend, but it wouldn't stay on his lips. If I'd told George that this wasn't Chicago, instead of that one of his guests had murdered his wife, Malone thought, he'd have denied *that* too. Right now, his mind can't accept things. The poor lug...

George studied Malone's face a moment, his eyes cloudy and remote. He shrugged. 'All right, Malone.' He turned and started up the back stairs. 'But I can't go in. I—'

'I know', Malone said. 'It'll only take a minute—and then we'll call the cops.'

At the door to Kathy's bedroom, George suddenly put his hands up to his face, his head bent, his shoulders shaking.

It hurt Malone to see George this way, but there was nothing he could do.

'I—I think I'm going to be sick', George said. He turned in the direction of the bathroom and half ran towards it.

Malone wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand and went into the bedroom. From the direction of the bathroom, he could hear George Weston being very sick. He closed the bedroom door and walked slowly round the bed and stood looking down at Kathy.

Any one of those men down there could have done it, he thought. Not the women, because only a man would break someone's neck quickly enough to avoid getting clawed and bitten. It took a lot of strength to break a neck; a hell of a lot of strength.

And motive? That would come out later. It always did. Right now he wanted the personal satisfaction of having a hand in finding the man who had killed a woman he loved dearly. His own deep reaction—the thing George was going through now—would come later, he knew.

He circled the room several times, and each time his eyes missed nothing. His brain was in high gear now, and his thoughts came quickly and clearly, the way they had before in similar situations. He looked for the obvious thing, the thing that seemed slightly wrong somehow. There was nothing. He came back to the sheet-covered body, and then, with the strongest reluctance he had ever felt towards anything, he bent and pulled away the sheet.

He looked down at Kathy Weston a full minute, his eyes covering every line and curve of her body. He stood wholly without movement, his face as devoid of expression as if it had been a wooden mask.

But, inside him, deep in the pit of his stomach, something tightened and drew into a hard, pulsing knot. And then, carefully, and with infinite gentleness, he drew the sheet back across Kathy's body and left the bedroom.

He walked to the bathroom. The door was open, and George Weston was not inside. Malone went to the stairway and down the stairs to the living-room.

The party was gay no longer. Everyone was in the living-room, and all were watching George Weston at the telephone. A quick glance at their faces told Malone that they knew what had happened, that George had told them. George put the phone down and looked at Malone. 'I've just called the police', he said.

Malone nodded. He took a folder of matches from his pocket and lit his cigar. 'Maybe it's just as well, George. A few minutes more, either way, wouldn't make any difference.'

'I got to thinking', George said. 'Up there in the bathroom. I guess you were right when you said I couldn't think, before.' He glanced quickly towards a broad-shoul-

dered man, in his middle thirties, with thinning blond hair and a pinched, sallow face. 'And I guess you were right in saying there was something special about Les McJanet. It must have been him, Malone. He just got out of prison for doing almost the same thing he did to Kathy.'

The blond man lunged forward, but two of the other men caught his arms and held him. 'What the hell *is* this?' Les McJanet shouted. 'What are you trying to pull, Weston?'

Malone put his cigar down in a tray. If there was going to be action, he wanted no tobacco coals in the air.

'It wasn't too difficult to kill Kathy', Malone said. 'With people going upstairs to the bathroom, and one thing and another, it wasn't hard to get to Kathy and break her neck and get down again without being missed.'

'Goddam it!' Les McJanet yelled. 'Let go of me.'

'In just a moment', Malone said. 'When you're calmer.' He looked round at the others. No one moved or spoke. All eyes were upon him. He turned back towards George Weston. 'You can't go through with it, George, and you know it. You're not made that way. I don't know exactly when you decided to kill Kathy, but it must have been just a few seconds after you discovered she was going to have a baby.'

George's eyes widened almost imperceptibly. 'A—a baby?'

Malone nodded. This was hurting him; this was tearing his heart out. 'Yes, George', he said. 'A baby. You couldn't stand it. You really loved Kathy, George. You practically lived for her. You felt you had to kill her, and the child too.'

For the space of ten heartbeats, George Weston's eyes stayed locked with Malone's—and then George looked away. His whole body seemed to slump. His head drooped.

'You know you can't go through with it, George', Malone said. 'You thought you could, but you can't.'

George wet his lips, and now his face had gone slack and his eyes were sick again.

Malone stood very still, waiting.

'Yes', George whispered. 'Yes. That's the way it was. I killed her . . .and I thought I could make it look like Les. . .but I can't. The minute I knew Kathy was dead, I didn't care about anything else. She's dead.' His voice was slowly gaining strength. 'And now I want to die, too. Do you hear? I *want* to.'

Malone nodded to the two men holding Les McJanet. 'Let him go', he said. McJanet took a step backward, gazing in stunned horror at his lifelong friend.

Out in the street, a car braked to a fast stop in front of the house.

'That would be the police', Malone said.

'I want to die', George Weston shouted. *'I want to.'*

'No, George', Malone told him. 'You do now, but time will change that. You wanted to die a long time ago, too, as I remember.' He looked away from George's tortured face. 'Don't worry too much about dying. I've saved worse than you from the death house—and I can do it again. Things will be bad, George—but not that bad.'

There was a heavy knock on the door, a heavy, official knock.

Les McJanet suddenly found his voice. 'But how—how'd you know Kathy was—was going to have a baby?'

'I saw her, McJanet. Her breasts, the slight swell of her stomach—not enough to show when she was dressed—but the signs were unmistakable. She was going to have a baby, all right.'

'But why should George...? I mean...what's wrong with a baby? Why should he kill...?'

'George used to ride a motorcycle in a big cage with a carnival', Malone said softly. 'One day he had an accident. It was a bad accident, the way it can be when a motorcycle almost rips you down the middle.'

Malone whirled and jerked open the door for the police.

'You see,' Malone went on, 'being a father was one thing George Weston could never do.'

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# *IS CRIME BECOMING AN AMERICAN EXPORT?*

*Canadian authorities are described as working closely with the FBI and other American law enforcement agencies in an effort to block invasion of Canada by American crime syndicates. The police are convinced that American racketeers are out to organize crime in Canada, beginning with border cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, after which they plan to take over the Canadian gangs and expand their "business" — stock frauds, narcotics, prostitution, gambling and counterfeiting. There is supposed to be local resentment (softly voiced, of course) at the invasion of these American "efficiency-experts" in the less gentle arts, prompted in part by a crackdown on narcotic smugglers in the New York area, forcing a shift to Montreal and Toronto where the volume of heroin entering Canada has risen markedly. In addition to this, New York and mid-western based bookmakers are said to be expanding their Canadian operations which include supplying track-side information on races, offices for the transaction of sundry business, and making the necessary arrangements for the protection of gamblers hit by losses on big bets. It is by now certain that New York gangsters masterminded Canada's largest bank robbery — the theft of more than three and a half million dollars from an Ontario bank in 1958 — and that they have been responsible for several other Canadian bank robberies.*

***In other words, Crime Inc., made conscious of the potentialities of the expert market, has apparently moved into Canada.***

# the purloined letter

*by... Edgar Allan Poe*

AT PARIS, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little black library, or book-closet *au troisieme, No. 33, Rue Dunot, Faubourg St. Germain.* For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Roget. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much

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*As James Russell Lowell was to write in Graham's Magazine for February 1845, Edgar Allan "Poe had that indescribable something which men have agreed to call genius. No man could ever tell us precisely what it is, and yet there is none who is not inevitably aware of its presence and its power. Genius claims kindred with the very workings of nature herself, so that a sunset shall seem like a quotation from Dante or Milton, and if Shakespeare be read in the very presence of the sea itself, his verses shall but seem nobler for the sublime criticism of ocean. Talent may make friends for itself, but only genius can give to its creations the divine power of winning love and generation."*

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From: THE WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE,
Volume 1, Tales,—1859, New York

of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G.'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling every thing "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way I hope?"

"Oh no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves: but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd*."

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair *is* so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you *do* talk!" replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is little *too* plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little *too* self-evident."

"Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roared our visitor, profoundly amused, "oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what, after all, *is* the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance, has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing *out* of the robber's possession; —that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it."

"Be a little more explicit," I said.

"Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

"Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

"No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized."

"But this ascendancy," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare—"

"The thief," said G., "is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognises the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped; leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of

the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the latter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G.; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minister's hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"O yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D——is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at

a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being *destroyed*," said Dupin.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin. "D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course."

"Not *altogether* a fool," said G., "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggrel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why the fact is, we took our time, and we searched *everywhere*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is *so* plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or

bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have tried to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the gluing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bed-clothes, as well as the curtains and carpets."

"That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

"You include the *grounds* about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-*cover,* with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the

letter is *not* upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G——. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the Hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh yes!"— And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said—

"Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as over-reaching the Minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward— I don't like to say how much, precisely; but one thing I *will* say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any-one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the which of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this manner. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How?—in what way?"

"Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?—puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of spunging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

"'We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor what would *you* have directed him to take?'

"'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take *advice,* to be sure.'"

"But," said the Prefect, a little discomposed, "*I* am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter."

"In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a check-book, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunder-stricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an *escritoire,* took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

"So far as his labors extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even

and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and ad-measurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, "are they even or odd?' Our schoolboy replies, 'odd, and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'the simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd;'—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: 'This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even;'—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy whom his fellows termed 'lucky,'—what, in its last analysis, is it?"

"It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

"It is," said Dupin; "and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucault, to La Bougive, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin; "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their

*own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of the *mass;* but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice,* without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration *of the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such *recherches* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this recherche manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presume; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the Prefect *feels;* and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

"But is this really the poet?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I

know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister I believe has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet."

"You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect."

"You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason *par excellence*."

"*'Il y a a parier,'*" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "*'que toute idee publique, toute convention recue, est une sotise, car lle a convenue au plus gran nombre.'* The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance —if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra' about as much as, in Latin, *'ambitus'* implies 'ambition,' *'religio'* 'religion,' or *'homines honesti,'* a set of *honorable* men."

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value, of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra, are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregrious that I am confounded at the university with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *un*true that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned 'Mythol-

ogy,' mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that 'although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.' With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the 'Pagan fables' *are* believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that $x^2+px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal to $q$. Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where $x^2+px$ is not altogether equal to $q$, and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

"I mean to say," continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, "that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold *intriguant*. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as *ruses*, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed— I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed

when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident."

"Yes," said I, "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertia,* for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent *momentum* is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs, over the shop-doors, are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

"But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D——; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand,* if he intended to use it to good purpose, and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to

the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

"Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial hotel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive —but that is only when nobody sees him.

"To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

"I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly, some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery fillagree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantel-piece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D—— cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D——, the minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D—— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S—— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, was diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D——, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyper-obtrusive situation of this doc-

ument, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

"I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed. I bade the Minister good morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

"The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a *facsimile*, (so far as regards externals,) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings —imitating the D—— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread.

"The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay."

"But what purpose had you," I asked, "in replacing the letter by a *facsimile*? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly, and departed?"

"D——," replied Dupin, "is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have

left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political pre-possessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni;* but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum,* an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms 'a certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

"How? did you put any thing particular in it?"

"Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS, and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

" '—— —— *Un dessein si funeste,*

*S'il n'est digne d'Atree, est digne de Thyeste.*"

They are to be found in Crebillon's 'Atree.' "

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# *NEXT MONTH—*

PIRATE TREASURE TRADITIONALLY SUGGESTS
THE SPANISH MAIN—
BUT THE SAINT HAD A NOSE FOR PIRACY ANYWHERE
AS WE SEE IN

**THE HELPFUL PIRATE**

***A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS***

*—in THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE*

# flowers from the dead

*by... Cornell Woolrich*

THE CIGARETTE Persis Grey had been toying with fell to the producer's expensive carpet. Even so, she didn't seem to notice what had become of it. Her two fingers retained their hooked position around nothing, while her sea-green eyes stared with a sort of stricken intensity at the young executive's face—as though he had just spoken her death-warrant. Relznick, her agent, had to extend one foot and tactfully press out the smoldering embers. Then he extended it an inch or two further forward, screened by the producer's desk, and nudged suggestively at the edge of the star's own daintily shod extremity. She didn't seem any more aware of the signal than she had been of the dropped cigarette. Her breathing had noticeably quickened. Where the diamond clasp on the bosom of her dress had winked two or three times a minute, it now winked twice as often.

The producer had noticed the change in her, without being able to tell what had caused it. "Private car, of course," he reassured her, "and orchids and a welcoming-committee at every station."

She seemed to have trouble finding her voice. "No—don't— I

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*Cornell Woolrich, one of the very great names in this field, author of PHANTOM LADY, THE BRIDE WORE BLACK, and other novels, here brings back something of the spirit of the film industry of twenty years ago, and the importance of personal appearances by the star once the movie was made—even when, as in this case, her life might be in danger.*

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can't! Don't ask me to, Harry. I made the picture for you, gave it everything I had. I'll go to the opening night in Los Angeles, I'll even go to the one up in Frisco if you want me to. But I won't go East!"

The producer raised nonplussed brows at her. "What's the matter, Persis?" he asked mildly. "Don't you like the East? Most stars would be——"

"I don't want to go East! I want to stay here in California!"

The young producer still seemed to mistake it for mere whim. He tried reasoning with her. He was famous for his reasoning-powers, where temperamental stars were concerned.

"But it's not a matter of *staying* there, Persis. The whole tour won't last longer than ten days. It's just an overnight stop at each of the key cities where you put in an appearance——"

"Nights are pretty long," she murmured dismally. "Nights last twelve hours."

"What, Persis?" The producer had failed to catch the remark.

She didn't repeat it, just shook her head. He exchanged a perplexed look with the agent. The latter seemed as surprised, as unable to account for her behaviour, as he was. Persis Grey had always had the enviable reputation of being one of the least difficult of all high-priced stars to handle, of being democratic, willing to co-operate, of remaining unspoiled despite her success.

He shot the agent a reproachful look. "You should have told me."

"I didn't know— I didn't dream—" the latter protested. "I didn't discuss the matter with Persis until now. I took it for granted she'd be only too— My other clients usually jump at the chance to road-show their pictures."

The producer shaded his brow for a moment in consternation. Then he tried again. "Look at it from the point of view of a business proposition, Persis. You're not being asked to give your time for nothing. You share in the profits of the tour. There's a minimum guarantee, on the part of the theatre-owners, of twenty-five thousand dollars, for just five personal appearances. Denver, Kansas——"

She was suddenly leaning toward him in her chair. "Where else?" she articulated in a husky voice.

He consulted a memorandum on his desk. "—St. Louis, Develand, and then finally——"

*"Develand?"* She whispered it and rose to her feet.

"That's your home-town, isn't it, Persis? Where you were born and brought up? I should think you would be very happy to make an appearance there. There must be people whom you used to know, who will remember you——"

Her face was white, as white as though she were made up for the cameras in a death-scene. "Yes,

Harry," she said slowly, her eyes never leaving his face. "I imagine there are people there who used to know me, who will remember me. But I'm not going, so—there'll be no way of finding out for sure." She turned towards the door.

"Persis, you've got to go through with it. This tour can *not* be cancelled!" The producer could be firm when the occasion demanded. "It's part of the booking-arrangement through which we sold the picture to the exhibitors in those cities. Your personal appearance was guaranteed with the picture. No appearance, no picture. They can hold us up for breaking the terms of the agreement. It's too valuable an investment to be jeopardized just by a climatic preference——"

She laughed, but without mirth. There was a sort of macabre despair in the sound of it. "That's right, that's very well put. I do like the climate here better than—back there." She came back to the desk, whipped out a small chequebook, reached for a fountain pen. "And to show you that I mean it, and don't want you or anyone else to lose money on my account— How much salary did I draw while I was working in *The Devil and the Lady?*" The question was purely rhetorical. "I'll make you out my personal cheque for the entire amount here and now. In other words I worked on that picture for nothing, free of charge—but *I will not go East in person!*"

The agent sat there goggle-eyed, as though he couldn't believe his ears. The producer caught the wrist fluctuating over the open chequebook, stopped it. "It's no use. That won't help any, Persis. There's hundreds of thousands in vested in that picture, much more than you draw in salary. You couldn't make the whole amount good. I couldn't myself. We risk losing the whole stake——"

She let the pen go, put the chequebook away. "I'm sorry, but no power on earth can make me go East."

The producer was not dull-witted. He wouldn't have been sitting where he was if he had been. He eyed her steadily, speculatively a moment. "Have you been threatened back there, Persis?"

"A threat is conditioned. *If* you refuse to do this or that, something will happen to you. Isn't that what a threat is?" She smiled bleakly. "No, I haven't been threatened," She opened the door, stood poised for departure.

"Because if you're afraid of anyone or anything, we'll furnish you with protection," he went on. "I'll have a special detective detailed to accompany you."

"That sounds so well—on paper. You could give me ten detectives, fifty, and I still wouldn't go." She took pity on the stricken face he held turned toward her. "I'm sorry. I'd do almost anything within reason for you, Harry, but"—she closed the office door on the two

men, finished on the other side of it, beyond their hearing— "I'm twenty-six years old, and life is too sweet to be thrown away!"

After she'd gone, the producer turned toward the cringing agent. "Now what do you make of that? She's the last one I ever thought would——"

"I— I dunno, K. J.," the ten-per-center faltered uneasily. After all, it meant his bread-and-butter. "How about sending someone in her place? Her stand-in, for instance? As I understand it, all she's supposed to do is the Waltz with Satan from the picture, in a smoky-red stagelight, at each appearance. She ought to be able to pass muster with the audiences."

"I'm afraid we'll have to do something like that," the producer agreed worriedly. "But we'll have to let the exhibitors in on it, if not the public itself, and will they kick! We promise them Persis Grey and send them some unknown girl instead!" He snapped on his inter-office speaker. "Get me Persis Grey's stand-in. I can't recall her name at the moment."

While he was waiting, he mused: "I wonder what it was had her so scared? Something had her frightened stiff, you could see that." He sliced his hand against the edge of the desk. If she needed protection against someone or something, this substitute's going to need it too— because as far as the public is concerned it's still Persis Grey we're sending out. The least I can do is to see that she gets it." He snapped on the desk speaker a second time. "Get me police headquarters— Inspector Ross."

They sat there, two very strained people, alone in the closed, locked drawing-room, waiting for the train to pull out. They were as uncomfortable as fellow-patients in a dentist's waiting-room. The girl was a mouselike little thing, whose only resemblance to Persis Grey was in stature and bodily proportions. The whole extent of her duties until now had been to stand motionless under hot lights while camera-angles were adjusted. She was keyed up to within an inch of her life and obviously a good deal frightened by this new responsibility that had been suddenly thrust on her. "Are you a press-agent?" she ventured.

Walsh raised his head from the magazine he had been pretending to thumb through. "No," he said, briefly, politely and noncommittally.

She tried again, fanning a hand before her face. "I don't like so many flowers in a closed room, it always reminds me of a funeral."

"Ought to be pulling out soon," he remarked to that. He got up, crossed to one of the curtained windows and tried to peer behind the edge of the blind.

"Don't pull up the shades!" she warned excitedly. "I was told to

keep them down while we're in the station."

He came away again, gave her a look. "You're not Persis Grey, are you?"

"No. I never said I was."

He sat down again, kneaded his hands. "I wish I knew just what was expected of me," he muttered.

A hurried knocking at the drawing-room door interrupted them. The girl whispered excitedly: "Don't let anyone in! They warned me—"

"Bo-o-ord," echoed outside.

The knocking came again, twice as hurriedly. A voice called through the door: "Libby, let me in!"

"That's Persis herself," the girl exclaimed. "I guess it's all right."

He went over, turned the key. The star swept in past him without a glance, made straight for her understudy. Behind her a chauffeur staggered in laden with innumerable boxes. Persis took the stand-in by the shoulder, started her toward the door. "Hurry up, get off this train, you little fool! I've changed my mind. I'm going to make the trip myself, after all! It'd be too brutal. I couldn't let them send you or anyone else in my place!"

The panelled woodwork around them was already beginning to creak with preliminary motion. "Don't stand there staring at me. Hurry up, jump off—the train's starting! Fred'll drive you back to the studio in my car. Tell K. J. he doesn't have to worry about his exhibitors. Persis Grey will be there in person, at every theatre that's expecting her, and if she has to disappoint a few—that won't be her fault."

The timid understudy, more relieved than disappointed at this sudden lifting of responsibility, darted out through the door and disappeared, the star's chauffeur at her heels.

Persis closed the door after them, drew a deep breath of resignation, remarked: "She didn't know what she was up against. I, at least, do."

She seemed to become aware of Walsh for the first time. "You staying? And who might you be?"

"Walsh of headquarters," he said, palming his buzzer. "Inspector Ross assigned me to accompany you."

She shook her head gloomily. "Well, Mr. Walsh, you might just as well have gotten off the train when that stand-in of mine did, back there."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because what good will it be? Unless, of course, you just like travelling for travel's sake. I can assure you you'll be making the trip back alone."

His jaw set a little. "Would you mind giving me an idea of just what it is you're frightened of?"

"I can't do that, but I can give you an idea of conditions you'll be working under. We're stopping off at five large cities. At each of those

places there'll be reams of publicity in the papers, announcing my arrival, giving the exact time I step off this train. And then that night, at the theatre where my picture is showing, I'll dance a waltz on the stage, before hundreds of people, with a partner made up to look like Satan. And at one of those places, in all those crowds, death'll be waiting. As sure as anything, death'll be waiting. How can you or anyone else protect me? Don't you see it's not a one-man job?" She smiled ruefully. "Do you know what I did, before I left my house just now? I made my will."

Walsh stared at her grimly a moment. Then he said: "Well, in case there are any changes you want to make in it, you'll be able to attend to that when you come back."

"Thanks for trying, anyway." She held the door open. "And now, would you mind waiting outside in the car-foyer? Even a dead woman likes to get into a negligee."

Walsh knocked on the drawing-room door a quarter of an hour before they were due to arrive in Denver, two nights later.

"Come in." Persis looked up from a magazine. "Hello. On the job, I see."

"You ready to leave the train?"

"All set, but we still have another fifteen minutes, haven't we?"

"No we haven't, I'm taking you off with me at the last stop outside Denver. We'll drive the rest of the way in from there. Just bring whatever you need for your stage-performance."

She selected a small hand-grip from the massed baggage that occupied one whole side of the drawing-room. "What about the reception committee? They'll think I've been kidnapped."

"I'm not taking anyone into my confidence. I'll leave a note in here assuring them I'll have you at the theatre at the expected time. Now, have you got something that'll shadow your face? You're pretty well-known, you know."

"This do?" She tried on a hat with a floppy brim that fell down over her eyes.

"Fine." They went outside to the vestibule, closed the door after them.

"I'm not so worried about Denver. Denver's still the West," she remarked. "It's when we get further——"

"You know you'd make it a lot easier for me if you'd give me an inkling of what I'm up against."

"How can I, Walsh, when I'm not sure myself?"

"But you knew to the extent of drawing up a will before you left——"

The halting of the train cut short further discussion. He jumped down, scanned the platform in both directions. There was no one in sight, the train hadn't been expected to stop here. That was a little detail Walsh had arranged himself.

He gave her his hand, and they

hurried across the platform together and inside the station. Before they had even emerged at the other side of the waiting-room the train was gliding on its way again.

"It'll get in a little ahead of us, but that won't matter. At least you won't have to run the gauntlet through a mob of fans. I want to keep you out of crowds as much as possible. If there is danger, danger'll probably strike from a crowd."

She shook her head slightly. "I have my doubts about that. What it's far more likely to do is spot me from a crowd—for later on."

He helped her into a cab. "I wish you'd co-operate a little with me, Miss Grey. After all——"

"I'm funny that way. It's pretty personal, and——"

"Oh, I see." He took the snub, edged a little away from her on the cab-seat. "I guess you're right. I'm just a detective and you're a celebrated movie-star." He didn't speak again until they had passed the city-limits. "At what hotel were reservations made for you and your party?"

She gave him the name.

"Well, just to be consistent in my precautions, we won't go near there but to another one altogether. I can't guarantee it'll be as luxurious but it'll be a lot safer."

"That's the main thing," she agreed.

When they had reached their destination he escorted her into the lobby, left her seated in a large chair partially screened by a plant. "Keep your head lowered, I'll arrange for the accommodations."

He went over to the desk, asked for a two-room suite, signed the register, *T. Walsh and sister*. Then he returned to where he had left her. "Go straight to the elevator." Walsh said tersely. He picked up her bag and moved along beside her, shielding her from view.

Their two rooms were inter-communicating, but also had separate doors opening on the corridor. "Keep the one from yours locked. We'll come in and out through mine," he said.

They dined in their rooms, Walsh joining her at her insistence. Half an hour before she was due to appear on the stage they came out and went downstairs again. They took a taxi and drove to the theatre, which was only four blocks away.

The street before the playhouse was bleached with high-powered arc-lights set up for the gala occasion, and there was a crowd milling around on both sides of the street, drawn by the fact that Persis Grey was to appear here in person tonight. However, this was nothing compared to the immediate vicinity of the stage-door, down the side-street, when they had rounded the corner. There was a tight cluster of people here, patiently waiting for a glimpse of her because they knew she would have

to go in through there sooner or later.

Walsh knuckled the glass cab-front. "Keep going. Take us around the block and bring us up to the front entrance again," he told the driver. "I'll slip you in the front way with the rest of the audience. They won't be looking for you there," he murmured to her.

They got out a door or two short of the entrance to avoid the direct scrutiny of the high-powered lights, mingled with the crowd, and wormed their way through. He flashed his badge at the inner doors, in lieu of a ticket, to gain admission for her. "Send the manager over to us, and don't keep us standing out here any longer than you have to."

When the manager had approached them, flower in buttonhole, Walsh said: "Show Miss Grey to her dressing-room. I have her here with me. And try not to attract any attention doing it."

The manager tried to peer under the enshrouding hat-brim to make certain. She raised it a moment, assured him, "I am Miss Grey," lowered it again.

"Oh, er—of course! Right this way, Miss Grey! You don't know how honoured we are to have you. The last vacant seat's been gone since before five o'clock." He led them back and down below through a labyrinth of basement passageways, threw open a door. "I know this isn't like the dressing-rooms you're used to in Hollywood, but I hope you'll excuse us. I think you'll find everything you need. You can make your entrance up those stairs there, just ahead."

Walsh went in, took a look around just to make sure. Then he left her to herself, closed the door, propped a chair against it on two legs, and straddled it. He switched his gun to a more accessible position in the side pocket of his coat, keeping his hand on the butt.

It wasn't any too well-lighted in the gloomy passage that fronted the dressing-room, still no one could approach from either end without his becoming aware of them. He was ready for anything—except what he got.

There was a soft, slithery tread on the steps that the manager had said led down from alongside the stage, and which were at right angles to the corridor. Walsh turned his head that way just in time to glimpse a horrifying, unbelievable silhouette cast on the wall in advance of whatever was descending. Whatever it was, it wasn't human. It had spined bat-wings and a pair of stubby horns spiked its head.

The breath whistled out his nose and Walsh pulled his gun, by sheer reflex alone. If his hair didn't actually stand up, it crackled. A moment later a full-panoplied fiend or demon, complete down to short, forked tail, had rustled to a stop on the passageway-floor up there, stood glaring malignantly down at him through the eye-holes of a red

patent-leather mask. Walsh was within an inch of pulling the trigger, when the apparition spoke and saved itself. "Did Persis get to the theatre yet? We've been looking high and low——"

Then he saw the gun, shrank back against the wall, palms out. "Don't! Put that thing away! I'm her stage-partner——"

Walsh blew a hot breath of relief straight up against his own damp forehead. Then he took it out on the other vocally for the fright he'd just given him. "Beat it away from here!" he bellowed wrathfully. "She's here and she'll go on, on time!"

Satan slunk abashed up the stairs again, with a jittery sidelong glance at the gun-butt still cubing Walsh's fingers.

Persis came out a moment later, breath-taking also—but in another way—in a spreading ball-gown. He removed the guardian chair from her path, followed her up the stairs. "I nearly let one fly at your partner just now," he let her know sheepishly.

"That's Allen Duncan. He's just an extra-dancer they hired for the duration of the tour. The picture's about a lady who gives her soul to the Devil, in exchange for luxury. At the end of the waltz you'll see a cloud of steam and red fire rising up to hide us. That's when he's supposed to carry me off to hell with him. We really sink down through a trapdoor in the stage to the basement."

The glare of footlights flashed into their eyes as they cleared the top of the stairs, shining in sidewise at them through the wings. The manager was already out there on the stage-apron making the introductory announcement. The Mephistopheles that had so nearly run afoul of Walsh was just now scuffing the soles of his shoes in a box of resin.

The studio representative who had charge of the tour rushed up to Persis as soon as he had caught sight of her. "Where'd you disappear to?" he whispered frantically. "We had to stall——"

Walsh showed his badge. "It's all right, she was with me. She'll be on hand at every theatre where she's due to make an appearance. That's all you need to worry about. You just keep the baggage and the rest of the company moving along on schedule."

The manager's voice rose to a dramatic climax. "—and now, ladies and gentlemen, Persis Grey—in person!"

He bowed toward her, went off on the opposite side.

"I'll be standing here on the wings keeping my eye on you the whole time," Walsh whispered to her encouragingly under the cover of the teeming applause.

She went on, advanced along the footlights, waited for the applause to quiet, said a few words of appreciation. Walsh scanned the audience carefully, as much of it as he could see from where he stood

without revealing himself. The back rows and the balcony remained hidden. He knew that if what she dreaded—and he still didn't know what that was—took the form of an anonymous revolver-shot from somewhere out front in the audience, there was really nothing he could do to prevent it in time. Still, he didn't think that such a method would be tried. It would mean the escape of the assailant would be cut off immediately. He would almost certainly be caught red-handed then and there.

The orchestra launched into the introductory music, the footlights turned red, and stage-lighting flickered over the back-drop. Satan came on, pursued and caught her. It was just a simple adagio dance, really, that didn't require any special skill. It was *who* she was that made it such a big draw. At the end of the waltz her Satanic partner swept his shoulder-cape around her, drew a knife from the scabbard at his waist, poised it high above her, let it plunge down toward her bosom.

At the same time jets of steam from vents in some hidden tube, or nozzle paid out along the footlights, were cleverly allowed to escape, veiling the two performers below the waist. Under cover of this misty curtain Persis' partner raised a trap at the back of the stage, picked his way down through it, holding her in his arms. From out front they gave the illusion of being consumed in smoke and flame. She emitted a life-like shriek just before the trap closed on the two of them—then a second, more muffled scream from down below somewhere.

The screen was lowered into position and the picture for which all this had been a build-up began.

Walsh turned and hurried down below, by the stairs he and she had used in coming up. He was just in time to meet her emerging, unharmed, from a boiler-room door, her diabolic partner at her shoulder. "Thanks, Duncan. See you on the train," she dismissed him. Duncan turned and went in search of his own dressing-room.

"What'd you think of it?" she asked Walsh.

"Is that second scream you give, from below the trap, part of the performance? It had me worried for a minute."

"Yes, it's part of the act."

"How'd he get you down?"

"An iron drop-ladder, I think. If he'd missed a rung, with me in his arms—" She shrugged. "Well, one down, four to go." She went in and closed the dressing-room door behind her. He mounted guard outside like before.

They made their escape through the front, deserted now that the picture was getting into its stride inside. Walsh got her into a cab undetected, and ten minutes later they were back in the suite at the hotel.

The airport-lights below them

were like phosphorescent paint streaked on the back ground, outlining the runways. "I never thought I'd ever come back here," she said, staring down as the plane banked to turn for a landing. "I never thought there'd be any power on earth strong enough to bring me back——"

Making the Develand hop by plane like this, which had been necessitated by the spacing of the town bookings—a train wouldn't have gotten her here on time—was going to prevent him from smuggling her off ahead with him the way he had at the last three places, he realized. Still, Denver hadn't paid off, nor St. Louis and Kansas City. Maybe her hometown wouldn't either. It had already crossed his mind once or twice that maybe the whole thing was some sort of neurotic illusion on her part. Maybe she had gotten some crank-note from back here—most picture-people got them at one time or another—and she was making a mountain out of a molehill, taking it too seriously.

There was a ravening mob of fans to be breasted outside the airport administration building, and she literally had to sign her way to the big car that had been placed at her disposal. Autograph books were thrust at her from all directions, and admiring hands snatched at the gardenias on her shoulder, the very buttons on her coat.

Walsh kept warding them off to the best of his ability, with a couple of local police to help him, gun drawn in his hand, but gripped in reverse and concealed in an enfolding handkerchief. He intended using it as a blackjack if the need arose. He finally got her into the car and slammed the door on the crowd, reeling the windows up on the insistent hands that were still reaching in with books and scraps of paper toward her. "Get going," he told the driver.

The big machine breasted its way through the crowd, cleared the airport finally, and started downtown.

"Boy!" he whistled. "What a mob!"

"Somebody left one of their autograph-blanks with me," she remarked, as she settled back. "I didn't have time to return it—" She started to crumple the single sheet, which seemed to have come out of a loose-leaf pocket notebook, about to throw it away. Suddenly she changed her mind, peered closer at it. "Wait a minute, put on the carlights."

She handed it to him when he did so. On it were scrawled three words —*Welcome home, Lucy.*

"Who's Lucy?"

"That used to be my name, when I lived here, before I went into pictures. Lucy Hillman."

"Must be somebody knows you pretty well." He put it in his pocket.

"And they want me to know it. And they didn't mean 'Welcome Home'." She reached over and put

out the lights, but he could still see her eyes in the dimness. They were good and wide and frightened.

When she had been shown to her suite, Walsh turned and barred the way to the other members of the party. "Miss Grey is going to stay up here until theatre-time and not see anyone. She's going to dine up here alone. And she's going to dress for the show here, too. No more basement dressing-rooms."

He closed the door on the sulky tour-manager and the rest, locked it. She had gone in ahead. He turned in time to see her coming back toward him again, looking as though she had seen a ghost.

"What's the matter?"

She could hardly speak. "Just this. Somebody's left this for me——"

It was just a bunch of violets she was holding in her hand, ringed with tiny white rosebuds, each one perfect, and the whole thing backed with silverfoil and green wax-paper. There were plenty of other floral tributes in the room. There always were at every stop she made, from the theatre-manager, from the local chamber of commerce, and so on.

"I don't get it. Why should that turn you so white?"

"Because——" Her teeth were chattering. "Because—the man I used to get these from, always violets and rosebuds, never anything else, has been dead five years!"

"Well, somebody else happened to hit on the same choice, that's all."

"No." She reached in the box they had come in, showed him the card. It was ivory-coloured against the snowy tissue-paper. Engraved—*Stephen O'Bannon.* Inscribed on the reverse, were the words, *I can hardly wait for tonight—Steve.*

"That's his handwriting, that's his signature." She shuddered. "I know it like my own. He always sent a card like that with them, saying something about 'tonight'."

"Well, then you were mistaken, that's all. He's not dead."

*"He died in my arms."* She whispered it so low he could hardly hear. "I felt his heart stop under my hand."

He scanned the floral box to see where it had come from, reached for the phone.

"That won't do any good. They won't know, won't be able to tell you. Maybe the order was given by telephone or through a messenger." She came close to him, twisted his coat-lapel in her hand. "Oh, if I had any sense, Tom, I'd turn around and get out of this town fast, *now,* without waiting another minute. 'Welcome home' and flowers from the dead! I knew all along it was going to be here. This was the place I was scared of most!"

"D'you want to? Say the word." He kept his hand poised over the phone. "I'll have a car brought around to the rear, take you straight to the airport——"

She hesitated, finally shook her head regretfully. "No, much as I'd like to, now that I'm here I guess I'll have to stay, see the thing through. They're expecting me at the theatre, and I can't do that to a whole audience, I never have yet. You can only die once, anyway."

"I still have something to say about that," he let her know, tight-lipped. He gave her an admiring look. She had spunk, he was thinking. First she had refused to let her stand-in be endangered in her place. Now she was refusing to disappoint an audience and run away from—whatever this was.

"For the last time," he insisted, "won't you give me an idea whom you have reason to fear, and why?"

"What's the use, we're too close to it now, to do any good. I can't prove anything. Technically I haven't been threatened, you'll notice. Just a bouquet of flowers and a welcome-home. By tomorrow morning, or maybe even by midnight tonight, it'll be all over. Maybe I'll tell you then—If I'm still alive. I'm going in and get dressed for the show now."

At eight the telephone rang. It was the tour-manager's voice. "We're ready to leave for the theatr now. Is Persis nearly finished dressing?"

"We'll be right down," Walsh said.

He knocked on the door. She came out a moment later in her stagedress, a wrap around her shoulders. She was a little paler than usual, but otherwise quite composed. Walsh opened the outer door.

"Just a minute."

He left her standing outside the doorway, stepped back within its shelter a moment to make sure the clip of his gun was filled and in working-order. He'd had his coat off just now, washing up.

On their way to the elevator she rapped at the door of the room that had been assigned to her stage-partner. "Coming Duncan? We're ready to leave now." There was no answer. "He must have gone down ahead of us," she remarked.

But he wasn't with the rest of the party when they had reached the car waiting outside. The tour-manager sent a bell-hop in to find out what was keeping him. "Tell him he's holding Miss Grey up."

The youth came back, reported: "I had 1009 on the house-phone and the gentleman said he's just putting the finishing touches to his dressing, to go on ahead. He'll follow in a taxi in a minute or two."

There was the usual mob blocking the alley leading in to the stagedoor, which in this case seemed to be set quite far off the street.

"Better take her in through the front, like I did the first three times," Walsh suggested. When the car had stopped she got out and ran for it, sandwiched in between Walsh and the tour-manager, and

was safely inside before people's heads had finished turning to see who it was.

A chair was brought to her and she sat down to wait, out of sight in the wings, for the minute or two that remained before her appearance, since she had no dressing-room to go to tonight.

The audience, which had been seated waiting for quite some time, began to fidget and grow restless. A scattering of impatient applause sounded from time to time. A soft swirl of fresh air, coming from somewhere in back of him, made Walsh turn his head suddenly. An alley door had opened surreptitiously. A grizzled face under a peaked workingman's cap was squinting in, trying to get a good look at Persis.

"What do you want?" Walsh snarled.

"No harm, mister. I heard she'd got here. I just wanted t'see her."

The theatre manager came over, ordered: "You'd better get back to your post and see that none of that mob out there sneaks in." He turned to them as the alley door closed again. "He's a new man. Our regular doorman was sick tonight, sent him over in his place."

The applause out front was becoming more and more insistent. "Hadn't we better get started, Miss Grey? It's a long picture. They won't be getting out till all hours if we hold it up much longer."

The tour-manager was pacing back and forth, fuming. "Lousy extra, who does he think he is, George Raft?" He went to the phone.

Persis crushed out her cigarette, spoke to Walsh. "We can't keep them waiting any longer, and I can't stand the strain of this much more myself. Go out there and announce me, I'll go on alone."

"How'll you manage the trap-door?"

The tour-manager came away from the phone. "I just had the hotel. He was seen to leave over twenty minutes ago, wearing his costume. I can't understand what's taking him so long to get here."

"Maybe he was in a traffic smash-up."

The manager's voice sounded resonantly outside in the auditorium. "—and now, Persis Grey in person!"

Walsh had accompanied her as far as the very outermost limits of the wings would permit. "In case you notice anything you don't like, I want you to signal me. I'll be right here at your elbow. The hell with the performance. Your safety comes first——"

"Yes, but how?"

"Take that paper flower out of your hair and drop it to the stage if you see anyone stand up in their seats or make any kind of suspicious move——"

"All right. I'll keep my eyes open."

She made her way out along the dazzling apron alone, as defenceless really as if he'd been a thou-

sand miles away—and he knew it. The real way to protect her would have been not to let her go on at all. Her voice sounded a little shaky. "—as most of you know, this is my hometown as well as yours, so it makes me very happy to be back here among all of you." She gave the applause a minute or two to die out, then nodded imperceptibly to the orchestra-leader. The footlights crimsoned and the "grips" projected the usual sheet-lightning display against the backdrop.

Walsh heard a stifled curse from the tour-manager, somewhere in the gloom behind him, and turned just in time to receive the full impact of a staggering form sent lurching off-balance in the direction of the stage. It was the same masked apparition that had frightened the wits out of him earlier in the week, only now he was used to it. They collided chest-on. Walsh side-stepped to let him pass, and some projection on one of the wings caught on his clothing. There was no time to see what it was. Persis was already starting to revolve by herself in the red spotlight. Walsh wrenched free, and Satan brushed past to join her.

Being late had made him nervous, his performance was rather uncertain, not as smooth as it usually was. He caught her in his arms, went out of step, finally got into the waltz with her. The infuriated tour-manager was crowding Walsh from behind, peering out over his shoulder. "He's drunk, the louse, that's what delayed him! Look, he went out of step——"

"No, he's not drunk," the detective contradicted. "I got his breath full in my face just now when you shoved him into me. Get back here. I want plenty of room."

Her hand had suddenly half-risen toward her hair, then changed its mind, dropped back again. They were spinning so fast it was hard to see just what became of it. But the flower was definitely in place. He gasped in relief.

Something clashed faintly on the floorboards beside him, half-drowned out by the music. He looked down, saw the dagger that belonged in the scabbard at Satan's waist. It must have been that which had hooked on to his pocket when they collided, clung there unnoticed by its cross-guard all this while, and only been shaken off now. He picked it up, tested it, suddenly was fiercely signalling the tour-manager back toward him again.

"C'mere and look at this a minute! I've seen him drive it into her up to the hilt, twice now. How does he do it?"

The other ran his finger along the edge, drew it back fast, licked the cut. "Not this one! He's supposed to use one of those trick, telescoping kind. This one's real."

"Well, he was on his way out there to her with it. It accidentally hitched on to my pocket, stayed behind. I told you he wasn't drunk!

He's gone out of step because the routine's new to him. That's not Duncan out there in that devil-suit and mask! That's a stranger out there dancing with her! I'm going to stop him first and ask questions later! Ring down the curtain. I'm going to get him in the leg——"

The steam and red fire were already swirling up around them. Walsh dropped to one knee, unlimbered, and sighted along the floor toward one of the hose-encased legs. They halted as the couple stopped for the dagger-thrust.

Satan's hand went up empty. He evidently hadn't discovered until that moment that the death-weapon was missing from his scabbard. He was faking the gesture, just as a genuine trouper would have in a pinch, but the mask hid his real expression.

"You're crazy, man. You'll hit Persis!" the tour-manager gasped. He joggled Walsh's wrist unexpectedly, deflected the shot into the floor as it came.

Walsh was staring at where the bullet should have ploughed in, inches away from his gun-muzzle. There wasn't a nick showing. "Blanks!" he muttered. "Somebody must have spiked it when I had it off back there at the hotel——" He shied it away, plunged out on stage toward them through the cottony steam.

He was an instant too late. The trap had just slapped shut on the two of them. He clawed at the grip and it wouldn't come up. Her abductor must have fastened it on the underside. Her muffled scream came up through the seams of it. Then a second one. She had never sounded two from below before, and the picture-screen was already down in place across the front of the stage. A third one sounded, faint, far-away, then it broke off short, as though forcibly stifled.

Walsh picked up something lying a few feet away, that he hadn't noticed until now in the gloom. The flower from her hair, that she had tried to cast toward him too late, just before she had been carried down below.

He ran out to the wings, the knife that was all he had now, clutched in one hand.

"Where does that basement-space lead out?" he ripped at them. The theatre-manager pointed the way for him.

The storage-room door, at the end of the passage, stood open a half-foot as he cleared the foot of the stairs, as though the occupant had been calculating his chances of escape until then. Walsh had been too quick for him, had cut him off. He caught a glimpse of the hideous red Satan-mask peering out at him through the aperture, then the door slammed closed in his face just as he got to it, and a bolt slashed across. He lunged against it with full body-weight, saw at once that it was no use. It was fire-proof metal. It would take blow-torches to get through there. He could hear Satan's footsteps moving around on

the cement flooring, but Persis had stopped screaming. He ran up again.

"There's a freight-elevator in the alley around in the back," the manager offered. "Maybe you could get down that way——"

"Why didn't you tell me that sooner!" Walsh thrust them aside, opened an emergency-exit door, came out into the alley. He motioned them back inside, closed it on them, to give himself plenty of elbow-room. Up one way, where the alley opened out to the street, the gate was shut and barred, with a metal flap swung to behind it in addition, to keep passersby from looking through. The crowd that had been ganged up around there earlier had melted away.

Down the other way, where the alley made a right-angle turn to the back of the theatre, a shaded electric bulb cast a wan light at the exact corner of the building-line. Under it sat the stage-doorman who had peeked in at Persis earlier, chair-back to wall, seemingly reading a paper. His head was out of line with it, though. He was looking surreptitiously down the other way, away from Walsh. From somewhere down there, out of sight, came a faint but unmistakable creak of pulleys.

Walsh flattened himself against the wall, sidled down toward him. There was something tense, watchful, about the motionless figure, but his attention was turned away from Walsh. The latter was within two feet of him now, hidden in the shadow cast by an overhanging balcony fire-escape. The creaking and straining continued. Suddenly he heard the watchman say guardedly out of the corner of his mouth: "O.K., Dan? Get her?"

A hollow answering whisper came up from somewhere underground. "I'm sending her up now, they've got me cornered down here. You'll have to finish her off up there, I couldn't. I lost my knife."

The watchman, eyes fixed steadily on something still out of Walsh's range, reached under his unbuttoned vest.

Walsh broke away from the wall, swerved out at him, just as the harmless end of a gun came clear.

Beyond him, in the back-section of the alley, a small loading platform was just reaching ground-level, bearing Persis' slowly pivoting form, a rope tight around her throat, its other end knotted to a grappling hook in the iron winch that looped above the platform-floor. Her hands were roped behind her. She looked as lifeless as he'd ever seen anyone look before.

He gave a seething intake of breath at the brutal sight, flung himself on the seated outlook. He pinned the half-withdrawn gun against the other's stomach with one hand, needled the point of the dagger into the side of his neck

with the other. "Drop that or I'll slit your——"

The watchman heaved spasmodically on his chair, relinquished the gun with suddenly splayed, rigid fingers. It slid down into his lap. Walsh caught it up and chopped him off the chair sidewise with a cut of the butt across his forehead.

Then he ran to the inert, marionette-like figure, flung his arm around her waist and heaved her to his shoulder to take some of the strain off her neck, began sawing the rope with his knife. She came down to the ground and found that she was still breathing, neck miraculously unbroken. He saw what had done it. A discarded telephone-directory, evidently thrown on to the loading-platform and unnoticed by the assailant in his hurry, had wedged itself under her teetering toes.

A muffled voice interrupted him while he was busy trying to restore her. "Hurry up, didn't you get her off yet, Gramps? Send it back down for me, they're working at the trapdoor, I gotta get out!"

Walsh jumped on to it and sent it down fast with a violent tug at the control-rope. He'd left his knife behind on the ground next to the severed ropes, but he didn't really need one. He had enough fury in him to take the place of a weapon.

It was pitch-black down there. Satan must have doused the light after he'd finished with Persis. Walsh located him by the rustle of the costume-wings he was still encumbered with. He was off the platform before it was within three feet of bottom. He'd never put as much heart and soul into a fight as he did now. An iron crowbar the opponent had provided himself with only got in one blow, and that landed painfully but harmlessy downward across one shoulder-blade, missing his head by a good margin. He got a grip on the Devil's throat, held his head where he could locate it, and went to work on it with pneumatic-drill precision.

A couple of minutes later he was on his way up on the loading-platform again, with a badly-battered Satan folded groaning over the crook of his arm. Persis had come to and was sitting on the doorman's chair surrounded by a crowd of solicitous comforters. A couple of cops and a local detective had shown up, now that it was all over, and were working on the stage-doorman.

"There's somebody bigger than these two behind all this." Walsh snapped at them impatiently. "Find out who put them up to it. Find out what happened to her stage-partner. He's disappeared——"

"No he hasn't," the local dick answered. "He's down at the morgue right now, in his underwear. He was stabbed to death in a cab on his way to the theatre, so this guy could substitute for him and get at her. The driver came in

and reported it stolen, and we found it abandoned half an hour ago with Duncan in it—dead." He took a twist on the doorman's arm. "Now who gave you your orders? Come on, whose triggermen were you two acting as tonight?"

"I can answer that." Persis stood up, faced them with pale inflexibility. "O'Bannon's the name." Her lip curled disdainfully. She turned to Walsh. "But he's too big for them to touch, he's got half this town on his payroll. And when people's bread-and-butter is at stake, you don't expect them to——"

"Oh, no he's not too big for us. Not this time," the city dick contradicted. "This time it's murder. We've got your stage-partner's body down at the morgue, and we've got these two rats—and last but not least we'll have your own testimony. I happen to know my superiors have been waiting for something like this for a long time. Well, we've finally got him with the goods. There's a new administration in office here now. Maybe you didn't know that, Miss Grey. It's been itching for a chance at him. This time he didn't play it as cagey as he usually does."

"Maybe that's because his heart was involved, and not his head. Take me back to the hotel, Tom. You'll find me there when you need me, gentlemen."

Later, Walsh asked her about that last remark. "What did you mean? That O'Bannon was formerly in love with you?"

"No, his son was. Five years ago, when I was just a show-girl working here, under my right name, Lucy Hillman. He used to send me violets and white rosebuds every night. His father was a big-shot racketeer even at that time. I didn't know that, thought the similarity of name was just a coincidence. What's more, I know Steve didn't either. His father had sent him to college, kept him in the dark about his activities. There was another mob trying to muscle in here at the time, bitter enemies of the O'Bannon bunch. They must have seen me with Steve, found out who he was. I found out later the very man whose night-club I worked in was one of them. He took pains to cultivate me, asked me all sorts of questions about Steve and myself, where we went, and what we did. I had an appointment to meet Steve one night. I was purposely delayed at the club. I got there late—but I got there just the same. I found him bleeding to death from bullet-wounds. He died in my arms.

"Then, too late, I found out whose son he was, and how it looked for me. I knew there'd never be an out for me, that there was no hope of ever convincing the older O'Bannon I hadn't deliberately been in the pay of his enemies, lured Steve there to his death. I knew he'd never rest until he got me. I got out of town that very

night, went to California, changed my name. That didn't fool O'Bannon any. He must have seen snapshots of me taken with Steve. Every year, on the anniversary of Steve's death, I got what I got tonight, a bunch of violets and white rosebuds, with one of Steve's personal cards. Just to remind me, of course.

"I was reasonably safe out there, but when I heard they wanted me to come back here, to Develand of all places— I couldn't take anyone into my confidence, because you see, in a way, I was a fugitive from justice myself. I was wanted just as badly, or nearly, as the actual killers themselves. I was an important material witness, the only one who could have thrown any light on his death. I couldn't tell anyone without implicating myself.

"Now I'm going to face the music, give my testimony, and see it through. I've been a coward but——"

"You a coward?" He shook his head. "Pardon a detective's crude way of expressing himself, but I never saw anyone show more guts. You deliberately came back to face an almost certain death, rather than let someone else risk it in your place. If you weren't a big movie star, I'd like to tell you how I feel——"

"Tell me anyway," she said.

## ONE WAY OF COPING WITH A BURGLAR?

*Pity the poor burglar who broke into an apartment in Nagoya, Japan, the other day, and who said to the startled girls he found there, in a threatening voice: "Allright, girls; Hand over everything you've got!"*

*Tamamami Oki, 22 years old, is reported to have answered: "Allright, but before you take our valuables, let me perform for you!"*

*At which she switched on the radio, found some appropriate music, and began slowly, moving gracefully, to take off her clothes — gradually, gradually...*

*The burglar, understandably shaken, was in no condition to notice that the other girl, Michiyo Oishi, 21 years old, had slipped out the back way and was at that very moment phoning the police.*

*Arrested, moment afterwards, the burglar — still dazed — is quoted as complaining to the police: "Of all the luck! How was I to know that the girls were professional strip treasers at a burlesque house!"*

# black mystery

*by...Terence Roberts*

WE WERE all really upset at losing John. It was not just the usual maudlin sentiment everyone expresses in a job such as ours, nor even the normal sentimentality that is blown about when anybody dies in our crazy form of society. We not only liked John; I think all of us had a genuine personal affection for him, something you don't often have time to develop in our kind of work. Besides, he was very good at his job. He would have made a darned good policeman because he went out to look for crime instead of waiting for it to happen, and then go try to find out what happened. Besides he was a likeable fellow; though, I have to admit, he was a constant headache to me, and in one measure or another to all members of my staff.

Funnily, though, I can't even now say for sure that we have lost John Barriston. We have no real proof of his demise; his body has never turned up; and nobody has ever really admitted "moving him along" as it were. But, above all, one can hardly conceive of John Barriston getting killed—or even just dying, for that matter. He was not indestructible like some men: he was just wide awake at all times, and he was not strictly honest—let's face it! I won't say that

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*Terence Allan Roberts spent a season aboard a Norwegian whale-catcher at the age of nine, and was shipped off to the Orient at the age of seventeen. In the thirties he joined a special branch of naval intelligence and sailed all over the world, ending up in the Caribbean, where he was to live for the next seven years. He now lives in this country.*

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he was dishonest, but he had his own code of behaviour and, seemingly, none of our so-called ethics. That's why strange people liked him so much and characters that would never do anything for anybody seemed to be willing to lay down their lives for him. Certainly, nobody else ever even suggested that a Black Carib trusted him, and then proceeded to demonstrate the fact that he must have done. What is more, he proved just this by dying, or whatever he did.

It all began, I suppose, when John Barriston stepped ashore from a very untidy little ex-coastal steamer that had been requisitioned at the beginning of the war. The Captain's name, I remember, was rather unlikely. It was Gustavus McDough, which he pronounced Muck-Dowoo. I believe he was a Greek. His command was about a hundred feet long, had once been painted black but was now striped like a zebra that had been dipped into a tank of red lead; and it had a crazy smoke-stack on a hinge. Once, years before, she had had to go under bridges or something. Her other appurtenances need not be mentioned as they do not figure in the story: but her crew does.

This was not just multi-colored and multi-racial: it was of all colors but absolutely undefinable racially. I know that the first mate was the product—and what a one—of an Iranian father and a West Indian (whatever that may mean) mother, but his father had a French mother, and his mother, of all things, a Kanaka father from the Island of Nieu, south of Samoa. He was rather a good chap, but he kept on cropping up in the damnedest places. The engineer of course, was a Scot—a two-bottle one—and he took a wife along with him: very bizarre. There was the inevitable Chinese cook, but he was born in Panama. Then there were the unusual types. The first was a young, very well-washed American—Norte Americano or Estados-Unidos-er, that is—who had been placed aboard to run a rather fabulous radio outfit because there was a war going on. I must say he was a nice fellow and somehow managed not only to preserve his manners but his sanity, though the former were a bit overdone and mid-western. Then there was this Raies.

The first time I set eyes on him was when he came down the turkey plank behind John Barriston, carrying at least ten assorted suitcases, bags, and other packages. He was sweating, but certainly not from strain. He was just hot, and well he might be for it was a good 97 in the shade under the palms up the beach and for once the Trade Wind had let us down that day. He wore no upper vestment; only a pair of enormous red pants, extremely tight-fitting around the hips, and bell-b o t t o m e d, that proved, later, to be made of very soft leather—by him! These were held up by an enormous belt of

some sort of rusty chain mail with a huge shiny sort of plaque in front. This, it later developed, was pure and very high-assay gold—also made by him! That was all. He was a really magnificent bluish-black with an absolutely unblemished skin and a purplish sheen. His feet were rather small and very neat though big enough, because he was all of seven feet tall. His hands were immensely long, with rather pronounced knuckles, but seemingly manicured nails, and tapering fingers like a born pianist is alleged to have to have. But his face!

John Barriston was a bit of a shock but nothing as to this Raies fellow. The former was medium sized and well built but supported a miniature handlebar moustache with a most anachronistic goatee like a Spanish Grandee: he had dark red hair. You couldn't really see his face but nobody wanted to look at it alongside this magnificent black man. The latter's whole head was a combination of that of an Egyptian statue of a very important person of about the Twelfth Dynasty carved in black rhyolite, and one of the better modern West African statues made of ebony or dyed black to look like it. His eyes were rather small, slit-like, and almost mongolian, but they were not bloodshot like those of an East African Masai. His cheekbones were exceedingly high and rather prominent; his forehead was high and smoothly domed backward and his head set on his rather heavy and very muscular neck just like a statue. I suppose he had hair but it was just not important. The lower part of his face—and it sounds funny to say this—was, darn it, a poem; there wasn't an angle in it, the whole thing looked manifestly as if it had been moulded as a whole. His lips were only slightly everted but perfectly chiselled, like a ripe plum that has been split and "healed". I remember looking at that mouth expecting it to be cruel, but it was anything but: it was just plain regal like the rest of the man.

Well, Barriston came trotting ashore mouthing pleasantries in a startlingly deep and sonorous voice. My first sight of him had prompted the notion that his voice would be high-pitched and extremely aggravating. This Raies person said absolutely nothing. A couple of my staff, including our radio operator who checked the boats, were introduced, and then Barriston and I headed up the beach to what we grandiosely called "H.Q." Raies walked along behind with the whole kaboodle, plus a bunch of cocoanuts he had gathered up on the beach without apparently paying for them or saying a word. I kept half looking around at this huge shadow that came behind, but I somehow dared not quite do so, while I must admit that Barriston fascinated me almost as much. He talked all the time, informing me that he was a New Zealander with

a Swedish mother, and an American passport. (I immediately signalled "trouble" on the last: not that I have anything against Americans, but simply because we were *not* but were operating in the Caribbean which is their sea. I began to wonder.) He was full of other intelligence, none of it unworthwhile or even boring. We hit H.Q.

This was a very lovely house built on the five mile cay by a fairly wealthy commercial bloke who had bought a right to harvest the enormous number of coconuts that grew thereupon—leaving, of course, the quota which is the "mariners' right" on all tropical shores. The man was a trader and owned a lot of other property but he had loved this island and made it his home. When the war started in Europe he gave it to whatever government could make use of it as a communications point and sort of legitimate watch-tower. The gift was not accepted till the war got hot; and until his two eldest sons had been killed in the R.A.F., as a matter of fact. He was not British, but carried a passport from the Republic of Honduras, and was a scion of a very fine old Sephardic Jewish family resident in the Antilles for some hundreds of years. The house was a vast bungalow tightly surrounded by Hibiscus bushes that seemed always to be in bloom, and was also half covered with Bouganvillea flaming in a dozen different colors.

We mounted the verandah. Then I realized somehow that this huge man behind us had not done so. I turned to ask him to bring the bags up and he was already heading off around the house. I looked at Barriston who gave me a very funny return look. We entered the main office and met the rest of the staff. There were, apart from the two who had gone down to the beach with me, four. One was English, one a Hollander, one a Frenchman from Martinique, and the fourth, Chinese from Singapore. The two at the beach were Britishers. Their duties and particular foibles need not concern us as they do not concern my story—except Jimmy Lee, the Singaporese. He was really the lynch-pin of our strange outfit, being our communications officer —our most vital function—but carrying on his whole system in a dialect of Yunnan Province whence his parents had originated. (This was better than any code ever devised, so that it saved literally months of pure time. He simply got on the radio and talked to other gentlemen conversant with this rare dialect in points all over southern North, Central, and parts of northern South America. Very convenient. John Barriston and Jimmy Lee took an immediate liking to each other.

And that was that: at least for two months. John fitted in very well, aggravated everybody but Jimmy, but brought a breath of the alleged "fresh air" into the place—

not to say that the trades didn't blow satisfactorily every day as was their wont. However, he did fuss me a bit by asking permission and then more or less demanding that he might take a trip to the coast of Nicaragua in, of all things, a two-masted dug-out canoe. In our work we did not ask too many questions of even our subordinates and, as I had nothing particular for him to do, and frankly didn't quite understand why he had been sent to me, I somewhat grudgingly said "Go!". He went, that night, in the most dubious looking maritime outfit that I have ever seen. And I suppose this is where it really began.

It was Jimmy who came about sundown to my small back office where I was trying to wrestle with the usual plethora of idiocies that are brought on by a war, and suggested (as he always did) that I come and see John Barriston off.

"Why?" I asked simply.

"Because it's really quite something... I can tell you" he announced. Then he looked disgustedly civilized as so many people from what we call the Orient can so easily do. I smiled a bit and rose. Jimmy headed off for the local fishermen's beach. This surprised me a bit but I knew better than to ask Jimmy why.

The night comes quickly in the tropics so that, although it was still early dusk, the islanders had bush-lamps already lighted and bobbing about on poles stuck in the sand. There were a bunch of canoes pulled up on the beach but, riding just offshore, was something outstanding. It had been many months since I had seen one of those. It was an enormous two-masted dugout, with two wide strakes above the gunwhales that could only have been constructed on the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua and only have been sailed this far by one people—the Black Caribs. As everything over ten feet long that sailed that sea then had to have a large number painted on her prow and at the head of her *main* sail (and I don't mean mainsail) I started to get official.

"It's O.K." said Jimmy, as usual pre-sensing my intent, "It's number N.435 out of Pearl Lagoon." And that brought me up sharp.

"What's she doing up here?" I asked. "She's big enough to take a torpedo if any Boche sub took a fancy that she was moving something. Not that one would waste a torpedo on that." I added hastily, One small pip would do it."

"I fancy so; and I fancy not." said Jimmy quietly.

"Explain please." I said.

"They might waste a 20-mm. but they wouldn't sink her. She'd just go down till she filled; then they'd take the sails and mast down, go overboard, patch the hole, outship anybody dead, bale her out, put up the masts and go home."

"Right." I said. We had reached the little lapping wavelets. I still did not know what this great

Carib canoe was doing here. Then I saw Raies. He was walking out of the water. He passed me by and went to a fisherman's lean-to up the beach. All I said was "Oh!" Then John appeared from the shadows toting two large bundles.

"All I need" he said cheerily. "Raies has the grub". And I must say that I was going to be very glad to get rid of that word "grub"; it has always annoyed me. He literally trotted off down the beach, through the shallows and hopped into the vast canoe. Then he came back, and Raies walked majestically out with an enormous load and stowed it aboard. John came up to us.

"I hate prolonged goodbyes" he said. "It was very nice of you to come down and see me off; and thanks very much for letting me go. I hope I'll be successful." And with that he stuck out his hand and pushed off, seaward and generally southward.

A few minutes later Raies appeared again, walked out into the sea and climbed aboard. Two other men and five very pretty—no, really beautiful—dark girls appeared mysteriously out of the depths of the canoe; two masts were stepped, three triangular sails set; a block of coral on a line hoisted aboard; and then night came. John Barriston had left. And that is the last we ever saw of him.

Two days later, Bryan Bayne, our radioman was found slumped over his panel. Since doctors were at a premium, we didn't have one, but I never go anywhere without several gallons of formaldehyde (for other reasons of my own) so, after being unable to find any cause of death, I pickled him. When the boat had taken him to the nearest medical center they couldn't find anything either. He was only 23 and apparently in perfect health.

About the time that the medicos were finding this out, Walter Skrowman, our "shipping expert" was found dead in bed. We went through the same routine. This all took about two months, during which time he heard nothing from John Barriston. Then one morning the inimitable Jimmy Lee came sauntering into my office. He had a devastatingly handsome, very tall, absolutely black girl in tow.

"Oh, Hullo, Jimmy." I said as matter-of-factly as I could in the presence of this ebony princess. "What brought this on?" or words to that effect.

"This lady is Mrs. Raies." he said. "She wants her boat back."

"Who's Raies?" I asked, for I still did not then know.

"The tall fellow who took John away, of course" he informed me.

"Oh!" I countered "And who's he?"

"I haven't the slightest idea" he replied. Then he added, "I have a message for you" and he shoved a neatly written cable-like form under my nose. I read.

This was the damnedest message

I have ever seen. It was from one Wong to another Wong, and no times or places specified. It said simply that *I* (of all people) should endeavour to collect *it* (not specified) on the Anacua Cays immediately. Wong No. 1. even insisted that I be there by Friday. It was Monday.

"What...?" I began, and then dried up for the statuesque Mrs. Raies was giving me a thrice over. "...do you want?" I finished rather lamely, diverting my attention from the implacable Jimmy to her enormous brown eyes.

*"Mey concha"* she said simply, in what could only be called "dulcet" tones—but with a real zip in them.

I wrestled with that for a moment and then brightened. An idea had struck me.

"If you forgive me, I speak only English and very bad Spanish, you are, I believe, Carib?"

"Not that I know of" she came back in perfect English but with a real lilt. That brought on a prolonged pause during which Jimmy sighed.

"I'm sorry", I told her and I meant it. "What nationality are you?"

"I have no idea" she replied.

That did it. I knew then that she *was* indeed a Carib, those wonderful sort of sea-gypsies of the Central American coast of the Caribbean; the only really free people left in the world. And then other things began to connect. Mrs. Raies, I pondered; the wife of the man who took John away; Messrs. Wong and Wong; it began to make a pattern.

"Jimmy!" I yelled, for he was sort of Southeast-asiatically drifting out of the room. "Who is Wong?"

"Which one?" he asked innocently. "That's one of the five biggest families in China... or was" he explained.

"The bastard who sent this whatever it is" I blurted out, indicating the piece of paper he had handed me. But it was the black statue who answered.

"That's the gold man on the Kuringuas" she said simply.

"How do *you* know?" I snapped.

"Meester Barreeson tell me."

"When?" I asked, beginning to realize that this was all becoming highly irregular.

"When he take my boat and come here." she replied.

"But he never came here."

"I know." she said. "My boat, very fine boat. *My* boat, not my man's, but he love Meester Barreeson and he give him my boat, tell him come here. He not come back. I come look. He no here. I want my boat." But she looked more sad than angry.

I looked at Jimmy who seemed very uncomfortable. I am sure we were both thinking the same thing —20-mm shells.

"What did Mister Barriston come here for?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said "but

my man like Meester Barreeston very much though he white man. He say he must get help."

"For what; do you know?"

"No."

I still don't know if Jimmy made a fatal mistake of omission at that point or whether he really did not know the one essential fact that might have saved everything including perhaps even John's life, for I am sure now that he was not at that time dead. Instead, Jimmy indicated the communication from Wong No. 1. and confirmed that it had indeed come from the particular one owning a goldmine on the Kuringuas River. He said that he felt the message to be most urgent and very important, quite apart from John's health.

This was obviously no way to run a war and I proceeded to make myself rather plain. I can get quite annoying if needs be, and I must admit that there was a lot of running about for quite some time thereafter. The net result was that I left on the Thursday on board a rather remarkable craft at sundown in company with the outstanding "Mrs. Raies", and a blithering local idiot who worked for me and said he could cook.

We sailed south toward Cape Gracios a Dios under a literally blazing moon. Our transport was a sort of scow with a large lateen sail foreward and a perfectly ordinary ketch mizzen aft. The steering device was kind of cranky and the pilot—an ancient Cayman Islander—did everything necessary with this small after-sail. It all seemed to work very well. But the cook was a complete failure, so the Black Venus took over; caught an enormous kind of mackerel with a troll, cooked it somewhere and served it with the inevitable red-beans-and-rice. I do not know where that came from but the whole mess was a delight. Then I, personally, went to sleep. Sometime after dawn I was awakened by a great commotion. We were on a reef; but for good.

This is almost standard practice in the Caribbean and usually results in nothing but a lot of shouting, going overboard, shoving with long poles, and getting one's feet torn to ribbons on the coral, but this time things were serious. There was a thick fog. Also there were breakers on the reef.

I went overboard with the other men and was heaving on my own pole when Mrs. Raies suddenly appeared in the little skiff that was carried amidships, using a paddle and sort of skidding around the stern of the lugger which was by that time pointing upward. She came alongside me, grabbed me, and just lifted me out of the water and into the canoe like a drowning rat, which I nearly was, and the next thing I knew I was enveloped in white mist and riding over still waters. She must have been every bit as strong as her husband. It had all been too quick, deft, and purposeful. Besides, I was still then

presumed to be carrying the white man's burden, or something.

We literally darted on through the swirling mist and presently skudded gently onto a sand beach. The astonishing Mr. Raies thereupon stood up in the skiff, divested herself of everything but a sort of D. Lamour wrap-around, grabbed up the bundles she had dumped in the boat and stepped ashore, or rather into the shallow water. I scrambled out and heaved the skiff up on to the beach. You couldn't see a damned thing for the mist.

I'll skip over the next bit because it took a long time and amounted to nothing. We sat down and regarded each other; the mist soon went away and the sun came out; there was just empty sea around half the compass, a line of coconut palms behind us, and beyond that, a dense thicket of buttonwood and sea-grape. I tried some conversation but was "shusshed". About half an hour later the statue got up, peered about and then beckoned me to follow her. We started into the bushes, she leading and carrying the bundles. We had gotten in about a hundred yards when things like a July the Fourth fireworks display suddenly seemed to burst out all around me. Apparently, it was six hours before I came out of it and it was then really frightfully hot. Of course, I felt awful.

It takes a long time to come out of a clean stroke from the flat side of a machete on the back of the neck, and I never and still cannot quite comprehend just *how* awful it can make one feel. I had never been clobbered before, nor even really hit, for that matter, and I began to think in a dazed and agonizing sort of way of those master detectives I had read about (in crazy paperbacks) in hotels. This was, I can assure you, much worse, but even worse still was that, when I did manage to get my eyes open and focus, what did I see but an enormous man standing over me quietly holding a bottle. And who should the man be but this Raies character— *Mr.* Raies, that is. He was wearing his inevitable reddish pants and large belt.

At first I wondered if he was going to sock me again with said bottle, which was Coca-Colaish, but, instead, he squatted down and offered me a swig. I must have been dazed for I took a deep draught without thinking—and that very nearly *did* kill me. It was some violent stuff tasting at first of fresh lime juice, but what it did to me the moment I had swallowed it I cannot possibly describe. I think I passed out, or rather, round and round, and collapsed. He held me up for a few moments and then a miracle happened. All the pain went away and my head was "quite clear", as they say. I blinked, gulped, held my stomach and looked him in the eye. He almost smiled. (The Caribs have their own pharmocopeia.) Then he

began to talk in a voice like a temple gong.

I cannot attempt to reproduce either his words, or his accent, but it was fascinating and it was rather good English but full of all kinds of expressions that I had never heard before but could not fail to understand. He was trying to say that he was sorry. I gathered that it had been he who had slugged me. He then went on to try to explain that he had sent his woman to our island because John Barriston had taken their canoe (which was actually his woman's) saying that he was going there. His woman had been away at the time but when she came back, and the canoe did not, after many days, she had decided to go get it. When she came back with me in tow he said he thought that there was some very funny business going on and, being a Black Carib which he was, he slammed first and asked questions afterwards. The latter were directed at his woman for some time and without interruption from me, it seems, and he was satisfied that an injustice had been done, that I was not up to any hanky-panky nor behaving like the average white man, to all of whom the Caribs take the strongest objection on all counts, and whom they never trust.

Although feeling perfectly well now, I was still considerably bemused mentally. There were several "screws" that had fallen out somewhere, so all I could do was ask where they might be. I got started, sitting on the leaf-covered mud under the buttonwood trees with the sound of the surf in the distance. First I wanted to find out where I was but elicited the single fact that it was an island. Then I asked how long ago John had left and was told three weeks. Then I hit a jackpot.

I said, innocently enough, "Why did he go?", and got the astonishing reply to the effect that Wong had told him to.

"Which Wong?" I asked, "The Kuringuas one?"

"Yes", said Raies.

"But why?"

"Because I told him to", replied Raies.

This didn't seem to be getting anywhere, so instead of saying 'why' again, I asked, "What is it that you and Wong, and John were doing?"

To this I got the astonishing reply, "Trying to help you, without getting caught". This stymied me for a moment.

"Doing what?" I asked.

"Make money, like we always did, but still make like I promise John." And he pronounced the last "Jo-un".

"But doing what?" I asked.

Raies paused for a long time and looked away rather like an animal which he was anything but—he was searching for the right word in English. He knew our word for it, alright, but some inborn "delicacy" (may I call it?) prevented

him from coming right out with it. He finally settled for the equivalent of "trading with all people". Then I got the clue. The poor guy was trying to tell me that it was smuggling—the oldest and most honored profession in the Caribbean, at which the Caribs have always been past masters at a lower level, having no nationality and being scattered up the coast all the way from Nicaragua to Yucatan. I burst out laughing.

And that's what did it, I believe, for he actually grinned, which was rather a disturbing sight. Also, in some measure it must have made me eligible for the second place as a white man at least halfway trusted by a Carib, for Raies then proceeded to ask me if I would promise as John had, never to give him away; and he went into quite a 'gespiel' as to how his people had learned never to trust a white man.

I told him, sitting there in the late afternoon sun, that I didn't give a damn what he did, or his people either; that I didn't trust any white man, or yellow man, or brown man, or black man, for that matter, but that I had a job to do and that this was purely and simply getting on with winning the current war; and this, only because I objected to anybody taking away from me that which I had, little as it was: and I elaborated on the last, it being quite true. This seemed to satisfy him but it took me two hours. Then he offered me his hand, which was very surprising. His grip started my present arthritis, I firmly believe. I asked for another swig of the Coca-Cola bottle.

Then I learned a lot. It seemed that, as soon as the war had started in Europe, the Caribs had been approached by "certain persons" and asked to smuggle something new. This came in lots of little bottles mixed up with leaves in bags. All they had to do was take these bags in their canoes to certain cays—clear a small area in the dense buttonwood bush, and scatter these bottles around with the leaves and other trash—then go away. When they got back home, they got paid—but plenty. Raies did not know what the stuff was but he said it looked like silver. The little glass bottles were only about the size of your middle finger. It was very heavy, and although the bags were small, each made just about one load for a strong man. I didn't get it at all, though I thought of the German Jewish refugee who had had a set of automobile tools made out of pure platinum and smuggled them out of Hitler Germany in an open tool-box. But, as it turned out, I was thinking the wrong way round.

By sundown I was feeling pretty good though I could not turn my head properly. Raies massaged it roughly but it didn't do much good. By this time I had elicited the facts that John had lived on this island and had left some stuff

at his camp. We went there, a matter of a mile through waist-deep swamp mud under mangroves. It was a small clearing with a lean-to and looked frightfully empty. John's stuff was neatly packed into two small wooden boxes. I went through it. To my surprise there was a walkie-talkie in it. Why hadn't Jimmy told me, as it was one of ours; or didn't he really know? This I managed to activate but I could not get anything out of it, for its range was limited and I did not know Wong No 1's address, as it were, though he must have been within range. I also found a notebook but, By God, everything in it was written in vertical lines in a script I did not know (I later discovered that it was Pali, of all things!) But there was a map.

I showed this to Raies and he studied it a long time, turning it round and round. He said something to the effect that his people didn't use papers. Then he got it —from a funny angle, which proved to be his home on the nearby mainland. He said something to the effect that this looked like the Anacua Cays. These I knew to be somewhere around the reef we had run on to, though that was only an estimate by time and mental dead-reckoning. I started to ask Raies about them but he was looking very "black"—you should pardon the expression.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

He was silent for a long time and I thought he had not heard me, but it was something quite else. Suddenly he jumped and became almost excited, which is not the way of a Carib. The substance of what he was trying to get over to me was that this was just the sort of thing he meant when he had said that no Carib should ever trust a white man. He was really upset that John should have made a map, and he pointed out to me that this could be found by anybody—just like me.

This seemed a bit abstruse but I saw his point. Whoever would ever visit this benighted sea-girt blob of mangrove swamp and find this little clearing, I could not figure, but then there *are* people in the Caribbean who make just this pastime their business. (One day, I'll tell you about Morgan's gold on the Viverros Cays).

The end of all this was that Raies finally broke down in part and admitted to me that we were on the particular Anacua Cay where they did their "trading". Then it suddenly dawned on me that it was Friday evening. Wong No. 1. had told Wong No. 2., that I (personally) should be *"there"* on Friday. I still did not know where "there" was but I was beginning to get an idea. Raies had said that his people were toting something heavy and getting paid for it; and Mrs. Raies had brought me here. John had left a map, and this was one of the Acacua Cays. I said:—

"Will you take me to where you dump the bags?"

Raies looked at me again for a long time. Then he nodded and we set off again. It was bloody hell wading through those swamps and then climbing over, under, or through the mangrove roots; also the mosquitoes were by then in full cry, and it was getting dark.

It was quite dark by the time we hit the clearing. Raies motioned me to silence and to keep back in the bushes while he prowled around. We were near the reef again and I could feel its pounding. Soon he came back with a lot of huge shellfish shaped like pond-snails—the local giant winkles—and we pried them out of their shells with our knives and ate them. And very good they were too. Raies said that the canoes would not come till the moon came up, which I knew would not be until after midnight just then, while it was then only about seven o'clock. I felt drowsy and began to hurt again. Raies produced another bottle out of his pocket. It was full of raw *clarian,* the locally distilled, about 90%, rum. I drank a couple of mouthfulls and sincerely believe that my entire gullet was pickled thereby, just as in a mortuary. But I slept.

There was something extremely odd going on when I awoke. There was nobody in sight though the moon was exceedingly bright. The trade wind had dropped as it usually does at night, and the surf on the reef was but a murmur; however, there were sounds. Luckily I was in deep shadow, so I got up and moved quietly around the clearing towards the beach. Then I got my worst shock.

There were four enormous Carib canoes lightly beached and about a dozen men and women moving about silently but also there was a long, shimmering, wet thing lying low in the swell just beyond the reef, which was here only some fifty yards from the beach. *Nobody* could mistake that one: it was a submarine and there seemed to be people running about all over it. The odd sounds came from a winch.

This was all wrong. According to Raies, his people simply boated whatever it was and strewed it about in a vacant lot on a mangrove cay, and then got paid for doing so. But here were the buyers right alongside the sellers, or at least the shippers. Something must have gone very wrong but I could not bring myself to believe that it was John or Wong No. 1.—or even No. 2. Somebody must have leaked the fact that the Caribs were playing it both ways, and they were taking no chances. The worst part of it was that, at that moment, a rubber dinghy was pushing off from the sub through a narrow channel in the reef while there were dozens of very distinctive sacks lying on the beach where the Caribs were assembled. Raies was not in sight, all persons present be-

ing far too short in stature. I considered.

I was unarmed and obviously not welcome by either party concerned. I had given my word to Raies, as John apparently had done, but in my case not as convincingly, I imagined. The sub was obviously not one of our lot, if so, why behave in this cloak-and-dagger manner in one of our ponds—apart from the fact we hadn't any submersible or even any floating hardware in the whole bloody area to spare for such shenanigans, while the other chaps were known to have almost 200 of the former operating more or less at liberty therein. Thus, one could just sit on the sidelines and watch a nice bit of smuggling and hope to get the recipient apprehended later and never know what it was all about; find out the latter and leave the former to somebody else; or *do something*. I had about five minutes to make up my mind.

I am not normally a man of action—in fact I abhor such behavior, much preferring to sort things out at a desk, even if it is made of kerosene cases. However, a thought dawned. This was that there is no color under moonlight; everything being black, white, or some tone of gray. Also, I was standing in a particularly gooey swamp among mangroves, and such swamps are always black. So I just took off all my clothes but my pants, rolled these above my knees and then plastered myself with goo, starting on the top of my head. My midback I had to just guess at. In a few minutes I looked quite black—to me, at least—in the brilliant moonlight. I took especial pains with my eyelids. Then I just drifted along under the trees till I was opposite the canoes, and waited.

In due course the rubber dinghy came ashore and I saw to my relief that its occupants looked like glaring corpses compared to my left arm. They were even a bit 'natty', as the saying goes and, although not one opened his mouth I would have known that they were Bosches by their clicking behavior. Now, something *had* to be done. I sauntered down the beach unnoticed by any of the Caribs who were naturally all pointing seaward. Our visitors gave no indication that they in any way suspected that I was not just a Carib late-comer. I joined the gang.

One of the visitors was not a German. He wore a polka-dot shirt and spoke in Spanish. He started talking fast. A Carib woman, obviously a bit alarmed (though that is an expression that can hardly be used regarding these tough people) answered him in kind, saying that the "headman" was coming. There was more talk and I moved closer to the bags. Then I reached down and picked one up—or rather, I tried to! It seemed stuck to the sand. I was making my second effort to tote it when there came a sharp signal from a mem-

ber of the landing party and I saw very distinctly a Luger glimmering in the moonlight and pointed directionally at my midriff. I dropped the bag and almost shouted "Aye-yah" which is noncommittal enough. This caused a stir and the man with the gun approached me. I retreated backwards trying to look not quite so frightened as I was. He gained on me; I started jabbering in phoney Spanish and finally broke into a run. Three shots rang out in quick succession; I kept going; then I hit the deep shadows under the mangroves, *and the mud*. I hit it sidewise because my right hip had suddenly gone flooey, and there were those damned Fourth of July effects again.

Unlike as in well-regulated fiction, I awoke, or came to, just where I had fallen, and it was a wonder that I had not drowned, for my mouth and one nostril were full of mangrove mud. It was still night and the moon had gone. I was very cold, and when I tried to move I felt alternately nothing, or pain such as I had never known before, all down my right side. Also, my left arm would not work. But my 'head' was perfectly clear. I wondered where I was for only a second, then I took a look at the beach. Nobody was in sight, and it all came back clearly to me. Then I tried to get up and passed out. And so I spent the balance of the night—off and on.

The sun was fairly high when I came-to for the last time. I felt pretty good as long as I didn't try to move. Then a shadow fell over me from behind. I could not turn over, and not only because of the pain but because I was literally "bogged down".

"Come here." I growled, and the shadow moved off and around and disclosed *Mrs.* Raies. She looked very annoyed. I naturally pleaded to be removed but she just went away without a word. I think I slept.

Anyhow in due course quite a posse arrived headed by Mr. Raies. They un-bogged me and I screamed bloody murder everytime they touched me, and went through the passing-out routine till I frankly became tired. Then Raies produced the famous bottle. The next I knew, I was stretched out in the bottom of a canoe, rocking gently, and having warm seawater poured over me. Mrs. Raies was at work with a dirty cloth on my face and chest; somebody else was tickling my right hip. Both processes felt rather good. I relaxed.

There was an old sail rigged over the canoe to give shade and everything was rather pleasant. But somebody hurt me and I howled. Immediately the Coca-Cola bottle was stuffed into my mouth. I took an enormous swig like a hungry baby—and went through the usual aftermath but, although both Mrs. Raies and the other one went on tickling me, nothing much after that seemed to matter.

It was a pleasant enough three day trip. I just lay there, being fed from that lovely bottle, and watching the spray, frigate-birds on high, or the stars; sleeping and dreaming enormously. Occasionally a blue-black face, chiselled like the proverbial statue, peered over my shoulder and looked at me before going away— I could not turn over. The canoe yawed and pitched a bit and some water seeped in and cooled my otherwise dead side. Then I was gently raised (after almost half a Coca-Cola bottle of whatever), was lifted over the gunwhale, and passed out for the last time.

I finally made it back to this deplorable world on my own bed with the smiling Jimmy Lee peering down at me with an amused expression. When he saw that I was cogent, he remarked: "Strange way to run a war, Sir." This made me very annoyed.

"What the devil d'you mean?" I bawled, and it hurt terribly—at the back of my neck.

"He'll tell you", he answered, jerking his thumb to the left, "But I have to call out the guard to clear the house before he will—*he says*. Shall I?"

"Yes," I said and sank back.

Jimmy left and there was quite a military performance that slowly died away. Then Raies loomed up at the foot of the bed.

"Where's the bottle?" I asked, perhaps plaintively.

His reply was most annoying. It was to the effect that I was now with my own people and my own "medicine" and that the bottle was empty anyway. Also, he said, there was nothing much wrong with me because I had not lost any blood due to the mud into which I had fallen but that my right leg might be no good anymore. This was interesting intelligence and I asked why. He told me that his people knew a lot about what he called "Medicine-work".

"What happened?" I asked.

I was feeling better, bottle or no bottle, and began to probe. It was not easy: it never was with Raies. He could talk, alright, but then he was a Carib. I respect him for that, but it does get difficult.

I had most of it fairly clear: it was so obvious. The Caribs, who had always been smugglers, or as they put it just "traders" between a dozen countries, had been co-opted to transport something small and heavy from the mainland to a cay. They had left it there, and the Germans had collected it. John had gotten on to this and somehow made a Carib trust him so that he found out where they were dumping the stuff. He had used his only reliable communication channel to let us know—the estimable Messrs. Wong, Wong, Wong, and Wong. Thus, three questions remained: what was it that was being moved, where did it come from, and what happened to it? I got nowhere with the first two questions so concentrated on the last.

It then transpired that Raies, being more or less headman, had watched—just in case, and from the mangroves—this unprecedented operation of the buyer actually arriving at the time the shipper, i.e. his gang, delivered. Even he had not known that it was I who had sauntered out late, black as I was with mangrove mud. After the shooting and my disappearance, he had thought merely that one of his lot had tried something and had "gone to bush". He just forgot it until the stuff was loaded and the sub had left. Then he came back to look for *me,* in the clearing. Finding me gone, they had counted heads, even chasing one canoe that had already left, overhauling it, and bringing it back. When they found their whole gang accounted for, they at first assumed that I had been one of the buyers all along and were about to go away but Mrs. Raies had said "No!" She had also apparently elaborated.

If, she had said, the two white men at my H.Q. had not been working for the "buyers" (the Germans) all along, and sending all their messages through my office, why should John Barriston have insisted that they, the Caribs, poison them, (which they later freely admitted they had on John's orders), why should I have gone to the trouble of having their bodies shipped to the medicos? Why also, she apparently had asked, had her husband "trusted" me, *and* John in the first place. It was not, she must have said emphatically, "right Carib". This had made Raies very disturbed. But he still would not do anything. Mrs. Raies did. *She* found me.

"Very decent of your wife" I murmured "Fine woman, and all that, but..." I suddenly felt limp.

"She fix you". Raies said. "I fix Jo-un". To him "fix" meant just the opposite to that term in American; but I did not get this at all at that time, so I asked what he meant. Then it came out.

"Look-you!" he began, "Carib man no trust White man. Mister Jo-un funny man but good man. He promise me; I promise him; even if woman say no. So I want plenty money." and he fell silent.

"For what?" I asked, struggling up; because money, in my opinion, is the clue and the key to everything.

"This" he said simply, reaching down below the end of the bed and heaving two small bags aloft for me to see. Even his enormous frame was literally groaning under the strain.

"What in God's name is that?" I asked.

"The silver stuff, mister. I put some lee bottle of silver-stuff on top of all bags and fill bottom with small stone like Mister Jo-un say I do. Then I put theese far in bush. Other man take bags; we people all go for canoe and away. I take theese when we put you in boat. You look now? What-for you-man want this so much?"

And sitting up in bed I cut open the bags and looked. They were filled with little, three-inch, glass vials of *mercury!* But before Raies had put three bags, up, the bed gave away with a crash and I screamed with pain—and Jimmy, against all orders came running.

I am not yet permitted to say how much Raies got in cash for that little effort; but this I will say: it did not change his magnificent free way of life, nor his strange garb, nor his wife, nor anything else you could covet. What is more, he popped up again not so long after in a most unlikely guise—but more of that anon. The thing I *am* permitted to say is that intercepting one—perhaps small—flow of mercury from the United States and several other countries to the Axis did play at least a part in World War II. Ask any munitions manufacturer why.

But of John Barriston or Mrs. Raies' boat, *nothing*. I tend to agree with Jimmy Lee, that a sub picked them up on the way to us, weighted and sank the canoe, and then itself was "killed". It was just about then that we really started chopping them off.

I am still extremely sorry about John.

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# WHAT MAKES A DOUBLE AGENT?

*The arrest and subsequent conviction of a Military Intelligence officer as a proven Russian agent, has caused understandable concern in British Intelligence circles. This man was not a double agent in the normal sense of those words. He was an intelligence official with files, a man who handled and studied papers, and who met and organized people into networks of information and inquiry. He was a collector of facts and contacts who, while he had access to comparatively little information of any real military value, did know one thing the other side was most interested in knowing—who the people were on the other side of the Iron Curtain whose lives would be endangered if he or anyone like him should talk. After all, some writers to the contrary, more than one person usually does know the whereabouts of these men and these women whose lives depend on Soviet intelligence not learning their whereabouts — or their mission!*

*Should he have been caught earlier? Who can say? A secret service cannot always divide itself into two halves, as when Himmler's men spent so much time watching Admiral Canaris' men during the late war. It makes for organizational problems. It is safe to assume that the Russians were properly objective — and somewhat sceptical even — about much of what this man told them, and it is even possible, as some have suggested, that he was in effect "a traitor betrayed". All this however to theorize. The fact remains that it was proven, as it has been before and will be again, that an occasional traitor is one of the risks of the game. There have been amazingly few of them, even in war-time. And therein lies our strength in the West . . . . .*

***ARPAD —***

# the liberty of the subject

*by... Avram Davidson*

THE WINTER of '52 was perhaps no colder than any other in London, but Anthony Komer felt it more. The fireplace in his little room in the Borough of Stepney was blockaded, not very effectively, with sandbags or something of that sort; the wind blew in just the same, damp and cold. Against one wall was a gas-grate. It ran on shillings and pence, and both were very scarce with Anthony Komer that winter. For a shilling he could get a meal of a scanty sort, and be warm for as long as he could drag the meal out. By profession he was a Political Exile. It didn't pay very well.

He lived on the second floor of a little house in a tiny court in the region where Aldgate and Whitechapel and Goodman's Fields came together; Jack the Ripper had plied his knife in these streets and courts and alleys, but that was long ago, and the Africans and West Indians and Sikhs and Pakistanis and Malays and Maltese and Cypriotes who lived there now had never heard of him. When Anthony Komer went to register with the Aliens Officers at the Whitechapel Police Station he often had to wait until someone in a turban or a velvet or lambskin cap had presented his own police-book for

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endorsement. It was very annoying, and he often asked himself why the British allowed these people to come and live there.

They were a foolish lot, the British; it was no wonder that their Empire was falling apart like a rotten tooth. The fact of the matter was that he was in exile because of activities which were illegal under political system—but of course he didn't say so—he had merely spoken the magic words *Political Exile,* and they had let him off the Channel Ferry. So long as he reported every two months (or as often as he changed his address) to the Aliens Officer, he was perfectly free to urge the abolition of the Royal House or the nationalization of women or the overthrow of any government in the world.

Once he had murmured to the sergeant—for it was only common sense to ingratiate one's self with the authorities— "That man who just left is an anarchist!" And he waited for the sergeant to lean forward and ask for details.

But the sergeant had only said, "Oh, yes?"

"Why do you not break into his room while he is away and make a search of his possessions?" Komer had suggested.

"Couldn't do that, y'know," the police-officer had said. "Be a violation of the liberty of the subject."

This was foolish enough, but Komer had spotted a flaw in it. "He is not a British subject: he is only an alien."

The man had handed back the police-book, the little booklet with his photograph and addresses and a few other details in it. "Makes no difference. *Next,*" was all he said. So it was plain there was nothing to be had from the British. *They* would not pay him to spy around and report his findings. Fortunately there were those who did, and so Anthony Komer managed to earn enough to keep his little room and eat his scanty meals. It was a come-down for a man like him to deal in such petty crime, it affected his temper for the worst, and he often quarreled with his landladies and in consequence he often changed his room. Which meant another visit to the police—but now he knew what a lax, simple-minded sort they were, he didn't mind.

Once, smiling broadly to show it only a joke, he had asked the Aliens Officer (a different sergeant this time), "What would happen if I neglect to report my change of address?"

The man had smiled back and said, "Oh, I shouldn't do that if I were you. Might get into trouble. Might get fined half-a-quid." So there you were! Was it any wonder that the colonies slipped away? If he, Anthony Komer, had the authority, he would rule with an iron hand. There would be no nonsense about the liberty of the subject, or of a loyal opposition.

There were quite a few genuine

political exiles in London, and he made it his business to know as many of them as he could. There were leftists who had had trouble with the right and rightists who'd had trouble with the left, and people of the center who were out of favor with both extremes. There were men who had tried to overthrow royalties and men had tried to reinstate them. And there were factional wars between groups of exiles from the same country. As a result Information was a commodity like any other. There were always those who wanted to know what someone else did, where he went, who he knew—and were willing to pay for the knowledge. Unfortunately they didn't pay much.

But, just as the fledgling physician whose clientel consists mainly of charwomen, dreams of someday having duchesses as his patients, just so did Anthony Komer dream of graduating to the private payroll of a well-heeled foreign government. He could move into a decent flat and be done with dragging his bundle from one shabby room to another. He would have his shirts and suits made for him by a proper tailor, instead of buying them off a barrow at the Sunday market in Petticoat Lane. Eat full-course meals in a good restaurant, and say farewell to six-pen'orth of chips in a greasy newspaper. Smoke the Sobranie black-and-gold, not midget Woodbines (five in a packet). Nod benevolently when the policemen touched their helmets to him—as they would. Be warm...

"All right, what do you want," the dapper, sallow man asked. They spoke in French, which was not the native language of either of them, and sat side by side in a scantily-occupied cinema. Komer mentioned a name. The man grunted. Komer hissed in his ear. The man drew away. He placed a piece of paper in Komer's hand, left the house.

Next day they met in a more pleasant location: a room in the Borough of Marylebone (St. Mary la Bonne, it had once been, but that, too, was long ago; much longer ago even than the days of Jack the Ripper.) It had taken Komer a long time before the government of the dapper, sallow man would show interest in him. It was by no means a Great Power, but it still remembered—very much—the days when it had been one, and still kept up the remnants of its colonial empire. Its home government was no longer a kingdom, but made up for that by being even more oppressive than when it was. At home people were hungry, but there was still money to spend abroad on men like Komer.

The dapper, sallow man twiddled with the dials of a radio. His face showed annoyance. "No music," he complained. "I like to have music on—softly—but today they are broadcasting nothing but news,

the weather, and gale warnings."

"After all," Komer pointed out, "a king does not die *every* day."

The other man scowled. "The King is dead," he snapped.. "And what will the British do with this opportunity? Will there be Court intrigues? An officers' *junta?* A palace revolution? *Any* kind of a revolution? No. Nothing of the sort. Nothing at all will be done to take advantage. The King is dead? 'Long live the Queen.' And that's all." He sighed, almost regretful, almost puzzled. Then he shrugged. "Well. To business."

"How long has our mutual friend been working on his report —his so-called expose?" he asked.

"Six months. . .they send him material from all over. . .smuggled out."

"It may be smuggled out of *my* country, but there's no need to smuggle it into this one. The friendly, tolerant British. A man prepares a slander against a nation with whom they have diplomatic relations and do they stop him? Do they even open his mail? Well. So." He reflected briefly. "No, we can't wait till he's finished. He might slip it out to a newspaper or a sympathetic public figure. When can you obtain this report?"

Komer pursed his lips. "In a few days— I think. I mean. . .well, I shall have to watch his room, his house. I may have to wait hours. I mean. . .it is cold, and—"

"What you mean is *money,*" the sallow gentleman said. He took out two red banknotes. "This is all you get until we have his report. Buy some long, warm underwear." Komer put one in his shirt pocket and one in his coat pocket. No pickpocket, he firmly believed, ever picked more than one pocket of a victim. It was best to be careful.

He tried to be careful in his search and seizure; he *did* see the man leave, he *did* get into the room unnoticed, and he *did* get the report. Up to that point all was well. But he should have realized, even before the shadow in the sleeping-alcove turned into a man, that they would not have left the report unguarded. The man came towards him in stocking feet, cursing in a low voice. Komer was neither big nor brave nor particularly quick, but the other man was older, and perhaps he was not entirely awake. In his coat pocket Komer had carried a book-end in the form of a man on horseback. He "wanted to match it in a curio shop," in case anyone should by chance ask.

The figurine's torso formed a perfect handle. Komer aimed for the temple. The man sagged, Komer caught him. There was, therefore, no thud or other noise to alarm the others in the house. Quite as a matter of course Komer put his hands in the man's pockets. There was a shabby wallet, which he took. But there was no time to open it. He left the house as

unnoticed as he had entered it.

He was only a bit disturbed that the man was dead.

It was Komer's intention to head for the Euston Square underground station. The streets seemed rather crowded; the further he walked, the closer the press grew. There were police in large numbers. It was impossible to go faster than a crawl, and the police were not letting people cross the streets. And then it became a matter of shouldering his way through the crowd, and then he could get no further.

"Might as well stop 'ere," a man observed to him. "You won't find no better plice to watch, not now you won't." A thinnish man, rather short on teeth, with an apple-colored nose and a trilby hat and a muffler. "Stop 'ere, mite," he said.

Really, Komer had no choice. Evidently he had wandered into the route of some parade. "What's coming off?" he asked, priding himself on his command of language and idiom. The apple-nosed man stared at him.

"Don't you read the pipers?" he asked, astonished. "Cor stone the crows! The King's funeral is what's coming off." At Komer's exclamation of "Surely not!" he ammended his statement. "Well, not the *funeral* exactly: what they're doing, they're bringing of 'im from the rile stition—King's Cross or Euston or St. Pancras, one o'them three—to where' e's going to lie in stite till the funeral, prupper. And a narsty dye for it it is, too." It *was* a nasty day; grey and bold, with wind and alternate gusts of rain and light snow. Komer resigned himself to a long wait.

"And did you see the poor Juke of Kent's wedding, deer?" an elderly woman in front of him asked her companion.

"Indeed I *did*," she said, proudly. "I saw *both* of them: the Anglican ceremony *and* the Greek one. A very good view I had, almost as close as I am now?"

Stupid woman, Komer thought, contemptuously. She had stood outside for hours for a brief glimpse of royalty passing in and out, and was happy about it. A nudge from the man next to him broke into his thoughts.

"See that policeman on the black 'orse? 'Im with the black plume in 'is 'elment and the sword in the black scabbard? Chief Constable, that's 'oo 'e *is*." Komer murmured an expression of interest.

"No, dear," the elderly woman said; "Prince Ernest Augustus is *not* descended from Queen Victoria's uncle, but from the dear Queen's daughter, the poor Empress Frederick. . ." Komer sighed, thrust his hands deep into his pocket.

Suddenly the crowd grew still. The bell of St. Pancras church began to toll, and somewhere in the middle distance a gun boomed. And then again. And again. The

two elderly women began to cry quietly into their handkerchiefs. The man in the trilby felt impelled to explain, and whispered hoarsely in Komer's ear: "We're not sorry cos 'e wos a 'ero, see. 'E wos no 'ero. 'E wos a *good* man, see? Flippin' roight. One 'undred per-cent *good,* and all the wye through. Thet's whoy we're sorry'e's dead. See?" And then he, too, was silent. And presently the procession passed by.

The mounted policemen. The naval ratings, their leggings moving and flashing in unison. The scarlet-jacketed Guardsmen. The two Royal Dukes, silk hats in hand —Edinburgh. Looking as if he had been struck a heavy blow and had not understood its exact nature; Gloucester, massive and ruddy, looking as if he understood only too well—Komer noted, sardonically, the single crystal drop glittering from the tip of the younger Duke's nose—and, just behind them, the body of the Sovereign, on a gun carriage, covered with the Royal Standard, crimson and purple and gold. . . The bell tolled. The gun boomed.

The procession went past. The crowd began to disperse. Suddenly Komer noticed a policeman's eye fixed upon him, and his heart beat (so it seemed) out of its normal rhythm. Then the policeman began slowly to move in his direction, though not looking at him. Komer tried to still rising fear. The thought came to him that he had to get rid of the wallet he had taken from the nameless man now lying dead. It was in his pocket, under his fingers. Hardly two paces away was an elderly man, slow and heavy, in a bowler hat and a black overcoat with a worn velvet collar. The pockets of his overcoat gaped invitingly. Komer took the wallet from his own pocket and very carefully placed it in the open pocket of the elderly man. He brushed by him and quickened his pace.

Suddenly someone jumped in front of him and seized his arm. It was the fellow with the battered trilby and the apple-colored nose. He was very angry. " 'Ere, *you*!" he snarled. "No, you don't try it on, not *'ere*—not *todye* you don't!" And Komer, pulling his arm from the man's grip, saw the policeman.

"What' all this about, Pippin?" the policeman asked. The angry man swallowed.

"What's my profession? I'm a pickpocket," he declared.

"I know *that,*" the officer said.

"Been up five times, I 'ave—"

"I know *that,*" the policeman repeated. "I saw you standing next to this man and I just thought I'd cross over and ask how you were getting on."

"Well, that's it, y'see. What I mean *is*: No professional would be working this crowd. *You* know that. We 'as our code of ethics. We *do* not work a crowd at a Royal funeral. And this dirty tyke was doing that. I saw 'im with 'is

'and in a old man's pocket, and—"

Komer was still. The policeman looked around. "Where is he? This old man?"

Pippin's jaw dropped. He ran his eyes around. "Cor stone the crows if I didn't forget to stop 'im! 'Ere! You search this fellow, and see if you don't find something on him which 'e can't account for!"

The policeman shook his head. "Can't be doing that, you know. You should know better: Liberty of the subject and all that. Better move along, now." Pippin tightened his lips, glanced at Komer, slouched away. The policeman inclined his head to indicate that Komer should move on, too. Thankfully, he did. He passed the loyal pickpocket, and their eyes met; and for the life of him Komer could not prevent himself from sneering. This was a mistake. With a curse, the Cockney flung himself at Komer, who backed off and kicked out at him. And then the policeman was there again, this time visibly angry. He caught hold of both.

"We can't have this! We can't have this!" he said. A second policeman put in an appearance: "A nice time for fighting! As for *kicking*—" he turned his annoyed red face to Komer—" Is that the way for an Englishman to behave?"

"I am no Englishman." Komer almost spat out the words. The man's tight grip hurt his wrist.

The policeman (there were two others now) released his grip. He took a little note-book from his pocket, and a pencil, but he did not open it. "Your name and address?" he said to Komer.

"Sixteen Sappers' Lane," he said; then, suddenly remembering that he had moved, he cried, "No, no—I mean, 12 Lollards Court." The only thing was to submit, bend before the wind, get away, get away. They must not know what he carried with him, or the trail would lead back to the room which he had so carefully—

"May I see your police book?" The question was really an order. Komer gave the little booklet into the hands of the law.

"No, see, what I mean t'sye is, no prupper pickpocket would 'ave 'is 'and in a man's pocket at the King's funeral, see; so when—" One of the policemen told him to hold his tongue.

"Which is it, then: 16 Sappers Lane, or 12 Lollard Court?"

Eagerly Komer said, "Twelve Lollard Court." The policeman closed the booklet, opened his notebook, then said, calmly, "I shall have to ask you to come with me."

Komer cried, "But why?"

"Violation of the Alien's Act. Failure to report change of address."

With a sinking feeling in his stomach, Komer realized that he had, indeed, neglected to report his latest move. He had been overcontemptuous, had intended to get around to it in his own good time:

the foolish police would take his word for it that he had only moved the day he reported. But now—What now? Would they search him, there in the police station. He assured himself that they would not, not for so minor an offense; but suddenly panic got the best of him, and he turned and ran.

They were upon him in an instant, and he lost his self-control completely, he kicked and screamed and struggled. A knot of people gathered, among them an elderly gentleman in a bowler hat and a black overcoat with a worn velvet collar. He spoke to another man—a fellow wearing a battered trilby.

"Dear me. What is going on."

"Foreign chap making a row," said the other. He had an apple-colored nose.

"Dear me" the old man repeated. "An extr'ordinary thing has happened to me," he said. "I reached into my pocket and I found this wallet—" The other man looked at him.

"'Ere!" He exclaimed. "You tell the coppers that. Maybe they'll believe me now."

"Of course. I intend to tell them. As soon as they have that fellow quieted down. A foreigner, you say? I shouldn't wonder. An Englishman," he said, "wouldn't make a fuss like that at his own hanging."

# AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

*This month's group of stories, as on previous occasions, touches on mayhem and the less gentle arts both in this country and abroad. Cornell Woolrich recreates the world of show business of some decades back when so much depended on the personal appearance of the star if a new film was to go over. We meet John J. Malone again and — as on previous occasions — see something of that very special world with which he is so familiar. William O'Farrell, one of the truly distinguished writers in this field, describes the brief romance of a much too ambitious woman. Fredric Brown, whose later novels of the South West are such vivid portraits of that region explains the thinking of a killer. And Terence Roberts, in the first story of a new series, describes an Intelligence operation in the Caribbean.*

*The text of Edgar Allen Poe's THE PURLOINED LETTER which appears in this issue, is from the four volume THE WORKS OF EDGAR ALLEN POE published in New York in 1859 by Blakeman & Mason. This edition, published for the benefit of Mrs. Maria Clemm, Poe's mother-in-law, includes a discussion of Poe's life and works by James Russell Lowell, originally published in Graham's Magazine for February 1845.*

# what's new in crime

*by... Stefan Santesson*

Andrew Tully's story of our Central Intelligence Agency, *C I A* (Morrow, $4.50) will distress the many who while they know so little are so ready to instruct the administration in its responsibilities to the rest of the world. Wickedly frank—to all appearances—and obviously written under the impression that those who read it will themselves have more than a nodding familiarity with the history of these recent years, this book is not for these people who have a rather uncomplicated approach to foreign affairs, but it should be required reading for those for whom History is something more than a processional of dryly presented "facts", with perhaps Freudian footnotes, and who have a suspicion that there's more to the story of these times than what they've read in their morning papers. Much much more...

This book will confirm that suspicion. This is history as a newspaperman has seen it—not, I hasten to add, the history of these times but rather the history of an agency of this government which has had and will no doubt continue to have an influence on the lives of many for whom Allen W. Dulles, and undoubtedly John A. McCone, are not even familiar names. That this should be so is one of the realities

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*Mr. Santesson, editor of this magazine since 1956 and former editor, between 1945 and 1952, of the Unicorn Mystery Book Club, continues his column on current mystery and suspense novels and other material.*

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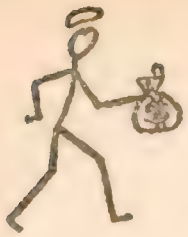

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of these times which it is high time we learn to live with, and Andrew Tully, who covered the White House and the CIA from 1948 until 1961, and whose travels as a foreign correspondent have taken him all over Europe, the Caribbean and South America, is uniquely qualified to spell this out.

Espionage is close to being as old as man himself.

In Elizabethan England, Ptolemaic Egypt, the Rome that knew the Borgias and in the France that knew Fouche, all shared the view of Sir Francis Walsingham that "knowledge is never too dear". It took Pearl Harbor to shock us into awareness of the need for a single, central organization equipped to analyze variously gathered intelligence reports and see to its speedy despatch to those concerned. The post-war abolishment of the Office of Strategic Services soon underlined the continuing need for a "National Intelligence Authority" which would plan, develop and coordinate "all Federal foreign intelligence activities". A Central Intelligence Group was set up as the operating arm of this Authority with at first only limited and precisely defined responsibilities. It was not until the National Security Act of 1947, under which the CIA replaced the CIG, that it was clearly spelled out that the new agency should correlate and evaluate intelligence related to the national security and perform "services of common concern for the benefit of existing intelligence agencies."

Tully's book discusses the rumors of CIA's meddling in the Algerian crisis, CIA's role in the overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala and of Mossadegh's government in Iran, and CIA's interest, to put it mildly, in the events in Egypt which led to Nasser's eventual rise to power. For, while CIA's efforts helped bring Nasser to power, there is considerable confusion as to what the CIA knew it was getting Nasser for its pains. Among those with authoritative understanding of the situation, the consensus is that while CIA was well aware of Nasser and his behind-the-scenes maneuverings, it firmly believed at one time that Major General Mohammed Naguib was CIA's contribution to Egypt as its man of destiny." *pp.* 100-101), and the U-2 flights, the reality that we have agents inside Russia, and other activities of the agency including, as the author puts it, the recent "catastrophe in Cuba".

There is neither time nor space to adequately valuate Andrew Tully's *C I A The Inside Story*. Suffice it that this is a report, a frank report indeed, on history in the making. This should be recommended reading for those for whom History is a living thing and who feel that Walsingham, in saying what he did, anticipated latter-day advocates of the importance of coordinated intelligence to a nation's security.

# the spherical ghoul

*by... Fredric Brown*

I HAD NO premonition of horror to come. When I reported to work that evening I had not the faintest inkling that I faced anything more startling than another quiet night on a snap job.

It was seven o'clock, just getting dark outside, when I went into the coroner's office. I stood looking out the window into the gray dusk for a few minutes.

Out there, I could see all the tall buildings of the college, and right across the way was Kane Dormitory, where Jerry Grant was supposed to sleep. The same Grant being myself.

Yes, "supposed to" is right. I was working my way through the last year of an ethnology course by holding down a night job for the city, and I hadn't slept more than a five-hour stretch for weeks.

But that night shift in the coroner's department *was* a snap, all right. A few hours' easy work, and the rest of the time left over for study and work on my thesis. I owed my chance to finish out that final year and get my doctor's degree despite the fact that Dad had died, to the fact that I'd been able to get that job.

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*There is a socio-documentary quality to much of Fredric Brown's writing in more recent years, since he has lived in the South West and written about that part of our country and its peoples in both novels and stories. And so Fred Brown has become one of the truly distinguished writers in this field, and whose people, now as in '42, are very much "alive" ...*

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Mr. Harry Altshuler

Behind me, I could hear Dr. Dwight Skibbine, the coroner, opening and closing drawers of his desk, getting ready to leave. I heard his swivel chair squeak as he shoved it back to stand up.

"Don't forget you're going to straighten out that card file tonight, Jerry," he said. "It's in a mess."

I turned away from the window and nodded. "Any customers around tonight?" I asked.

"Just one. In the display case, but I don't think you'll have anybody coming in to look at him. Keep an eye on that refrigeration unit, though. It's been acting up a bit."

"Thirty-two?" I asked just to make conversation, I guess, because we always keep the case at thirty-two degrees.

He nodded. "I'm going to be back later, for a little while. If Paton gets here before I get back, tell him to wait."

He went out, and I went over to the card file and started to straighten it out. It was a simple enough file—just a record of possessions found on bodies that were brought into the morgue, and their disposal after the body was either identified and claimed, or buried in potter's field—but the clerks on the day shift managed to get the file tangled up periodically.

It took me a little while to dope out what had gummed it up this time. Before I finished it, I decided to go downstairs to the basement—the morgue proper—and be sure the refrigerating unit was still holding down Old Man Fahrenheit.

It was. The thermometer in the showcase read thirty-two degrees on the head. The body in the case was that of a man of about forty, a heavy-set, ugly-looking customer. Even as dead as a doornail and under glass, he looked mean.

Maybe you don't know exactly how morgues are run. It's simple, if they are all handled the way the Springdale one was. We had accommodations for seven customers, and six of them were compartments built back into the walls, for all the world like the sliding drawers of a file cabinet. Those compartments were arranged for refrigeration.

But the showcase was where we put unidentified bodies, so they could be shown easily and quickly to anybody who came in to look at them for identification purposes. It was like a big coffin mounted on a bier, except that it was made of glass on all sides except the bottom.

That made it easy to show the body to prospective identifiers, especially as we could click a switch that threw on lights right inside the display case itself, focused on the face of the corpse.

Everything was okay, so I went back upstairs. I decided I would study a while before I resumed work on the file. The night went more quickly and I got more study-

ing done if I alternated the two. I could have had all my routine work over with in three hours and had the rest of the night to study, but it had never worked as well that way.

I used the coroner's secretary's desk for studying and had just got some books and papers spread out when Mr. Paton came in. Harold Paton is superintendent of the zoological gardens, although you would never guess it to look at him. He looked like a man who would be unemployed eleven months of the year because department store Santa Clauses were hired for only one month out of twelve. True, he would need a little padding and a beard, but not a spot of make-up otherwise.

"Hello, Jerry," he said. "Dwight say when he was coming back?"

"Not exactly, Mr. Paton. Just said for you to wait."

The zoo director sighed and sat down.

"We're playing off the tie tonight," he said, "and I'm going to take him."

He was talking about chess, of course. Dr. Skibbine and Mr. Paton were both chess addicts of the first water, and about twice a week the coroner phoned his wife that he was going to be held up at the office, and the two men would play a game that sometimes lasted until well after midnight.

I picked up a volume of *The Golden Bough* and started to open it to my bookmark. I was interested in it, because *The Golden Bough* is the most complete account of the superstitions and early customs of mankind that has ever been compiled.

Mr. Paton's eyes twinkled a little as they took in the title of the volume in my hand.

"That part of the course you're taking?" he asked.

I shook my head. "I'm picking up data for my thesis from it. But I do think it ought to be in a course of ethnology."

"Jerry, Jerry," he said, "you take that thesis too seriously. Ghosts, ghouls, vampires, werewolves. If you ever find any, bring them around, and I'll have special cages built for them at the zoo. Or could you keep a werewolf in a cage?"

You couldn't get mad at Mr. Paton, no matter how he kidded you. That thesis was a bit of a sore point with me. I had taken considerable kidding because I had chosen as my subject, "The Origin and Partial Justification of Superstitions." When some people razzed me about it, I wanted to take a poke at them. But I grinned at Mr. Paton.

"You shouldn't have mentioned vampires in that category," I told him. "You've got them already. I saw a cageful the last time I was there."

"What? Oh, you mean the vampire bats."

"Sure, and you've got a unicorn too, or didn't you know that a rhinoceros is really a unicorn?

Except that the medieval artists who drew pictures of it had never seen one and were guessing what it looked like."

"Of course, but—"

There were footsteps in the hallway, and he stopped talking as Dr. Skibbine came in.

"Hullo, Harold," he said to Mr. Paton, and to me: "Heard part of what you were saying, Jerry, and you're right. Don't let Paton kid you out of that thesis of yours."

He went over to his desk and got the chessmen out of the bottom drawer.

"I can't outtalk the two of you," Mr. Paton said. "But say, Jerry, how about ghouls? This ought to be a good place to catch them if there are any running loose around Springdale. Or is that one superstition you're not justifying?"

"Superstition?" I said. "What makes you think that's—"

Then the phone rang, and I went to answer it without finishing what I was going to say.

When I came away from the phone, the two men had the chess pieces set up. Dr. Skibbine had the whites and moved the pawn to king's fourth opening.

"Who was it, Jerry?" he asked.

"Just a man who wanted to know if he could come in to look at the body that was brought in this afternoon. His brother's late getting home."

Dr. Skibbine nodded and moved his king's knight in answer to Mr. Paton's opening move. Already both of them were completely lost in the game. Obviously, Mr. Paton had forgotten what he had asked me about ghouls, so I didn't butt in to finish what I had started to say.

I let *The Golden Bough* go, too, and went to look up the file folder on the unidentified body downstairs. If somebody was coming in to look at it, I wanted to have all the facts about it in mind.

There wasn't much in the folder. The man had been a tramp, judging from his clothes and the lack of money in his pockets and from the nature of the things he did have with him. There wasn't anything at all to indicate identification.

He had been killed on the Mill Road, presumably by a hit-run driver. A Mr. George Considine had found the body and he had also seen another car driving away. The other car had been too distant for him to get the license number or any description worth mentioning.

Of course, I thought, that car might or might not have been the car that had hit the man. Possibly the driver had seen and deliberately passed up the body, thinking it was a drunk.

But the former theory seemed more likely, because there was little traffic on the Mill Road. One end of it was blocked off for repairs, so the only people who used it were the few who lived along

there, and there were not many of them. Probably only a few cars a day came along that particular stretch of the road.

Mr. Considine had got out of his car and found that the man was dead. He had driven on to the next house, half a mile beyond, and phoned the police from there, at four o'clock.

That's all there was in the files.

I had just finished reading it when Bill Drager came in. Bill is a lieutenant on the police force, and he and I had become pretty friendly during the time I had worked for the coroner. He was a pretty good friend of Dr. Skibbine too.

"Sorry to interrupt your game, Doc," he said, "but I just wanted to ask something."

"What, Bill?"

"Look—the stiff you got in today. You've examined it already?"

"Of course, why?"

"Just wondering. I don't know what makes me think so, but—well, I'm not satisfied all the way. *Was* it just an auto accident?"

Dr. Skibbine had a bishop in his hand, ready to move it, but he put it down on the side of the board instead.

"Just a minute, Harold," he said to Mr. Paton, then turned his chair around to stare at Bill Drager. "Not an auto accident?" he inquired. "The car wheels ran across the man's neck, Bill. What more do you want?"

"I don't know. Was that the sole cause of death, or were there some other marks?"

Dr. Skibbine leaned back in the swivel chair.

"I don't think being hit was the cause of death, exactly. His forehead struck the road when he fell, and he was probably dead when the wheels ran over him. It could have been, for that matter, that he fell when there wasn't even a car around and the car ran over him later."

"In broad daylight?"

"Um—yes, that does sound unlikely. But he could have fallen into the path of the car. He had been drinking plenty. He reeked of liquor."

"Suppose he was hit by a car," Bill said. "How would you reconstruct it? How he fell, I mean, and stuff like that."

"Let's see. I'd say he fell first and was down when the car first touched him. Say he started across the road in front of the car. Horn honked and he tried to turn around and fell flat instead, and the motorist couldn't stop in time and ran over him."

I had not said anything yet, but I put in a protest at that.

"If the man was as obviously drunk as that," I said, "why would the motorist have kept on going? He couldn't have thought he would be blamed if a drunk staggered in front of his car and fell, even before he was hit."

Drager shrugged. "That could

happen, Jerry," he said. "For one thing, he may not have any witnesses to prove that it happened that way. And some guys get panicky when they hit a pedestrian, even if the pedestrian is to blame. And then again, the driver of the car might have had a drink or two himself and been afraid to stop because of that."

Dr. Skibbine's swivel chair creaked.

"Sure," he said, "or he might have been afraid because he had a reckless driving count against him already. But, Bill, the cause of death was the blow he got on the forehead when he hit the road. Not that the tires' going over his neck wouldn't have finished him if the fall hadn't."

"We had a case like that here five years ago," said Bill. "Guy named Robbins. Remember?"

Dr. Skibbine grunted. "I wasn't here five years ago. Remember?"

"Yes, I forgot that," said Bill Drager.

I had forgotten it, too. Dr. Skibbine was a Springdale man, but he had spent several years in South American countries doing research work on tropical diseases. Then he had come back and had been elected coroner. Coroner was an easy job in Springdale and gave a man more time for things like research and chess than a private practice would.

"Go on down and look at him, if you want," Dr. Skibbine told Bill. Jerry'll take you down. It will get his mind off ghouls and goblins."

I took Bill Drager downstairs and flicked on the lights in the display case.

"I can take off the end and slide him out of there if you want me to," I said.

"I guess not," Drager said and leaned on the glass top to look closer at the body. The face was all you could see, of course, because a sheet covered the body up to the neck, and this time the sheet had been pulled a little higher than usual, probably to hide the unpleasant damage to the neck.

The face was bad enough. There was a big, ugly bruise on the forehead, and the lower part of the face was cut up a bit.

"The car ran over the back of his neck after he fell on his face, apparently," Bill Drager said. "Ground his face into the road a bit and took off skin. But—"

"But what?" I prompted when he lapsed into silence.

"I don't know," he said. "I was mostly wondering why he would have tried to cross the road at all out there. Right at that place there's nothing on one side of the road that isn't on the other."

He straightened up, and I switched off the showcase lights.

"Maybe you're just imagining things, Bill," I said. "How do you know he tried to cross at all? Doc said he'd been drinking, and maybe he just staggered from the edge of the road out toward the middle

without any idea of crossing over."

"Yeah, there's that, of course. Come to think of it, you're probably right. When I got to wondering, I didn't know about the drinking part. Well, let's go back up."

We did, and I shut and locked the door at the head of the stairs. It is the only entrance to the morgue, and I don't know why it has to be kept locked, because it opens right into the coroner's office where I sit all night, and the key stays in the lock.

Anybody who could get past me could unlock it himself. But it's just one of those rules. Those stairs, incidentally, are absolutely the only way you can get down into the morgue which is walled off from the rest of the basement of the Municipal Building.

"Satisfied?" Dr. Skibbine asked Bill Drager, as we walked into the office.

"Guess so," said Drager. "Say, the guy looks vaguely familiar. I can't place him, but I think I've seen him somewhere. Nobody identified him yet?"

"Nope," said Doc. "But if he's a local resident, somebody will. We'll have a lot of curiosity seekers in here tomorrow. Always get them after a violent death."

Bill Drager said he was going home and went out. His shift was over. He had just dropped in on his own time.

I stood around and watched the chess game for a few minutes. Mr. Paton was getting licked this time. He was two pieces down and on the defensive. Only a miracle could save him.

Then Doc moved a knight and said, "Check," and it was all over but the shouting. Mr. Paton could move out of check all right, but the knight had forked his king and queen, and with the queen gone, as it would be after the next move, the situation was hopeless.

"You got me, Dwight," he said. "I'll resign. My mind must be fuzzy tonight. Didn't see that knight coming."

"Shall we start another game? It's early."

"You'd beat me. Let's bowl a quick game, instead, and get home early."

After they left, I finished up my work on the card file and then did my trigonometry. It was almost midnight then. I remembered the man who had phoned that he was coming in and decided he had changed his mind. Probably his brother had arrived home safely, after all.

I went downstairs to be sure the refrigerating unit was okay. Finding that it was, I came back up and locked the door again. Then I went out into the hall and locked the outer door. It's supposed to be kept locked, too, and I really should have locked it earlier.

After that, I read *The Golden Bough,* with a ntoe-book in front of me so I could jot down anything I found that would fit into my thesis.

I must have become deeply engrossed in my reading because when the night bell rang, I jumped inches out of my chair. I looked at the clock and saw it was two in the morning.

Ordinarily, I don't mind the place where I work at all. Being near dead bodies gives some people the willies, but not me. There isn't any nicer, quieter place for studying and reading than a morgue at night.

But I had a touch of the creeps then. I do get them once in a while. This time it was the result of being startled by the sudden ringing of that bell when I was so interested in something that I had forgotten where I was and why I was there.

I put down the book and went out into the long dark hallway. When I had put on the hall light, I felt a little better. I could see somebody standing outside the glass-paned door at the end of the hall. A tall thin man whom I didn't know. He wore glasses and was carrying a gold-headed cane.

"My name is Burke, Roger Burke," he said when I opened the door. "I phoned early this evening about my brother being missing. Uh—may I—"

"Of course," I told him. "Come this way. When you didn't come for so long, I thought you had located your brother."

"I thought I had," he said hesitantly. "A friend said he had seen him this evening, and I quit worrying for a while. But when it got after one o'clock and he wasn't home, I—"

We had reached the coroner's office by then, but I stopped and turned.

"There's only one unidentified body here," I told him, "and that was brought in this afternoon. If your brother was seen this evening, it couldn't be him."

The tall man said, "Oh," rather blankly and looked at me a moment. Then he said, "I hope that's right. But this friend said he saw him at a distance, on a crowded street. He could have been mistaken. So as long as I'm here—"

"I guess you might as well," I said, "now that you're here. Then you'll be sure."

I led the way through the office and unlocked the door.

I was glad, as we started down the stairs, that there seemed little likelihood of identification. I hate to be around when one is made. You always seem to share, vicariously, the emotion of the person who recognizes a friend or relative.

At the top of the stairs I pushed the button that put on the overhead lights downstairs in the morgue. The switch for the showcase was down below. I stopped to flick it as I reached the bottom of the stairs, and the tall man went on past me toward the case. Apparently he had been a visitor here before.

I had taken only a step or two after him when I heard him gasp.

He stopped suddenly and took a step backward so quickly that I bumped into him and grabbed his arm to steady myself.

He turned around, and his face was a dull pasty gray that one seldom sees on the face of a living person.

"My God!" he said. "Why didn't you warn me that—"

It didn't make sense for him to say a thing like that. I've been with people before when they have identified relatives, but none of them had ever reacted just that way. Or had it been merely identification? He certainly looked as though he had seen something horrible.

I stepped a little to one side so that I could see past him. When I saw, it was as though a wave of cold started at the base of my spine and ran up along my body. I had never seen anything like it—and you get toughened when you work in a morgue.

The glass top of the display case had been broken in at the upper, the head, end, and the body inside was—well, I'll try to be as objective about it as I can. The best way to be objective is to put it bluntly. The flesh of the face had been eaten away, eaten away as though acid had been poured on it, or as though—

I got hold of myself and stepped up to the edge of the display case and looked down.

It had not been acid. Acid does not leave the marks of teeth.

Nauseated, I closed my eyes for an instant until I got over it. Behind me, I heard sounds as though the tall man, who had been the first to see it, was being sick. I didn't blame him.

"I don't—" I said, and stepped back. "Something happened here."

Silly remark, but you can't think of the right thing to say in a spot like that.

"Come on," I told him. "I'll have to get the police."

The thought of the police steadied me. When the police got here, it would be all right. They would find out what had happened.

As I reached the bottom of the stairs my mind started to work logically again. I could picture Bill Drager up in the office firing questions at me, asking me, "When did it happen? You can judge by the temperature, can't you?"

The tall man stumbled up the stairs past me as I paused. Most decidedly I didn't want to be down there alone, but I yelled to him:

"Wait up there. I'll be with you in a minute."

He would have to wait, of course, because I would have to unlock the outer door to let him out.

I turned back and looked at the thermometer in the broken case, trying not to look at anything else. It read sixty-three degrees, and that was only about ten degrees under the temperature of the rest of the room.

The glass had been broken, then,

for some time. An hour, I'd say offhand, or maybe a little less. Upstairs, with the heavy door closed, I wouldn't have heard it break. Anyway, I hadn't heard it break.

I left the lights on in the morgue, all of them, when I ran up the stairs.

The tall man was standing in the middle of the office, looking around as though he were in a daze. His face still had that grayish tinge, and I was just as glad that I didn't have to look in a mirror just then, because my own face was likely as bad.

I picked up the telephone and found myself giving Bill Drager's home telephone number instead of asking for the police. I don't know why my thoughts ran so strongly to Bill Drager, except that he had been the one who had suspected that something more than met the eye had been behind the hit-run case from the Mill Road.

"Can—will you let me out of here?" the tall man said. "I—I—that wasn't my—"

"I'm afraid not, I told him. "Until the police get here. You—uh—witnessed—"

It sounded screwy, even to me. Certainly he could not have preceded me into the morgue only by a second and hadn't even reached the case when I was beside him. But I knew what the police would say if I let him go before they had a chance to get his story.

Then Drager's voice was saying a sleepy, "Hullo," into my ear.

"Bill," I said, "you got to come down here. That corpse downstairs—it's—I—"

The sleepiness went out of Drager's voice.

"Calm down, Jerry," he said. "It can't be that bad. Now, what happened?"

I finally got it across.

"You phoned the department first, of course?" Drager asked.

"N-no. I thought of you first because—"

"Sit tight," he said. "I'll phone them and then come down. I'll have to dress first, so they'll get there ahead of me. Don't go down to the morgue again and don't touch anything."

He put the receiver on the hook, and I felt a little better. Somehow the worst seemed to be over, now that it was off my chest. Drager's offering to phone the police saved me from having to tell it again, over the phone.

The tall man— I remembered now that he had given the name Roger Burke—was leaning against the wall, weakly.

"Did—did I get from what you said on the phone that the body wasn't that way when—when you brought it in?" he asked.

I nodded. "It must have happened within the last hour," I said. "I was down there at midnight, and everything was all right then."

"But what—what happened?"

I opened my mouth and closed it again. Something had happened

down there, but what? There wasn't any entrance to the morgue other than the ventilator and the door that opened at the top of the stairs. And nobody—nothing—had gone through that door since my trip of inspection.

I thought back and thought hard. No, I hadn't left this office for even a minute between midnight and the time the night bell had rung at two o'clock. I had left the office then of course, to answer the door. But whatever had happened had not happened then. The thermometer downstairs proved that.

Burke was fumbling cigarettes out of his pocket. He held out the package with a shaky hand, and I took one and managed to strike a match and light both cigarettes.

The first drag made me feel nearly human. Apparently he felt better too, because he said:

"I—I'm afraid I didn't make identification one way or the other. You couldn't—with—" He shuddered. "Say, my brother had a small anchor tattooed on his left forearm. I forgot it or I could have asked you over the phone. Was there—"

I thought back to the file and shook my head.

"No," I said definitely. "It would have been on the record, and there wasn't anything about it. They make a special point of noting down things like that."

"That's swell," Burke said. "I mean— Say, if I'm going to have to wait, I'm going to sit down. I still feel awful."

Then I remembered that I had better phone Dr. Skibbine, too, and give him the story first-hand before the police got here and called him. I went over to the phone.

The police got there first— Captain Quenlin and Sergeant Wilson and two other men I knew by sight but not by name. Bill Drager was only a few minutes later getting there, and around three o'clock Dr. Skibbine came.

By that time the police had questioned Burke and let him go, although one of them left to go home with him. They told him it was because they wanted to check on whether his brother had shown up yet, so the Missing Persons Bureau could handle it if he hadn't. But I guessed the real reason was that they wanted to check on his identity and place of residence.

Not that there seemed to be any way Burke could be involved in whatever had happened to the body, but when you don't know what has happened, you can't overlook any angle. After all, he was a material witness.

Bill Drager had spent most of the time since he had been there downstairs, but he came up now.

"The place is tighter than a drum down there, except for that ventilator," he said. "And I noticed something about it. One of the vanes in it is a little bent."

"How about rats?" Captain Quenlin asked.

Drager snorted. "Ever see rats break a sheet of glass?"

"The glass might have been broken some other way." Quenlin looked at me. "You're around here nights, Jerry Grant. Ever see any signs of rats or mice?"

I shook my head, and Bill Drager backed me up.

"I went over the whole place down there," he said. "There isn't a hole anywhere. Floor's tile set in cement. The walls are tile, in big close-set slabs, without a break. I went over them."

Dr. Skibbine was starting down the steps.

"Come on, Jerry," he said to me. "Show me where you and this Burke fellow were standing when he let out a yip."

I didn't much want to, but I followed him down. I showed him where I had been and where Burke had been and told him that Burke had not gone closer to the case than about five feet at any time. Also, I told him what I had already told the police about my looking at the thermometer in the case.

Dr. Skibbine went over and looked at it.

"Seventy-one now," he said. "I imagine that's as high as it's going. You say it was sixty-three when you saw it at two? Yes, I'd say the glass was broken between twelve-thirty and one-thirty."

Quenlin had followed us down the stairs. "When did you get home tonight, Dr. Skibbine?" he asked.

The coroner looked at him in surprise. "Around midnight. Good Lord, you don't think *I* had anything to do with this, do you, Quenlin?"

The captain shook his head. "Routine question. Look, Doc, why would anybody or anything do that?"

"I wouldn't know," Skibbine said slowly, "unless it was to prevent identification of the corpse. That's possible. The body will never be identified now unless the man has a criminal record and his prints are on file. But making that 'anything' instead of 'anybody' makes it easier, Cap. I'd say 'anything' was hungry, plenty hungry."

I leaned back against the wall at the bottom of the stairs, again fighting nausea that was almost worse than before.

Rats? Besides the fact that there weren't any rats, it would have taken a lot of them to do what had been done.

"Jerry," said Bill Drager, "you're sure you weren't out of the office up there for even a minute between midnight and two o'clock? Think hard. Didn't you maybe go to the washroom or something?"

"I'm positive," I told him.

Drager turned to the captain and pointed up to the ventilator.

"There are only two ways into this morgue, Cap," he said. "One's through the door Jerry says he sat

in front of, and the other's up there."

My eyes followed his pointing finger, and I studied the ventilator and its position. It was a round opening in the wall, twelve or maybe thirteen inches across, and there was a wheel-like arrangement of vanes that revolved in it. It was turning slowly. It was set in the wall just under the high ceiling, maybe sixteen feet above the floor, and it was directly over the display case.

"Where's that open into?" Quenlin asked.

"Goes right through the wall," Dr. Skibbine told him. "Opens on the alley, just a foot or two above the ground. There's another wheel just like that one on the outside. A little electric motor turns them."

"Could the thing be dismantled from the outside?"

Dr. Skibbine shrugged. "Easiest way to find that out is to go out in the alley and try it. But nobody could get through there, even if you got the thing off. It's too narrow."

"A thin man might—"

"No, even a thin man is wider than twelve inches across the shoulders, and that's my guess on the width of that hole."

Quenlin shrugged.

"Got a flashlight, Drager?" he asked. "Go on out in the alley and take a look. Although if somebody did get that thing off, I don't see how the devil they could have—"

Then he looked down at the case and winced. "If everybody's through looking at this for the moment," he said, "for crying out loud put a sheet over it. It's giving me the willies. I'll dream about ghouls tonight."

The word hit me like a ton of bricks. Because it was then I remembered that we had talked about ghouls early that very evening. About—how had Mr. Paton put it?—"ghosts, ghouls, vampires, werewolves," and about a morgue being a good place for ghouls to hang around; and about—

Some of the others were looking at me, and I knew that Dr. Skibbine, at least, was remembering that conversation. Had he mentioned it to any of the others?

Sergeant Wilson was standing behind the other men and probably didn't know I could see him from where I stood, for he surreptiously crossed himself.

"Ghouls, nuts!" he said in a voice a bit louder than necessary. "There ain't any such thing. Or is there?"

It was a weak but dramatic ending. Nobody answered him.

Me, I had had enough of that morgue for the moment. Nobody had put a sheet over the case because there was not one available downstairs.

"I'll get a sheet," I said and started up for the office. I stumbled on the bottom step.

"What's eating—" I heard Quenlin say, and then as though he regretted his choice of words, he

started over again. "Something's wrong with the kid. Maybe you better send him home, Doc."

He probably didn't realize I could hear him. But by that time I was most of the way up, so I didn't hear the coroner's answer.

From the cabinet I got a sheet, and the others were coming up the steps when I got back with it. Quenlin handed it to Wilson.

"You put it on, Sarge," he said.

Wilson took it, and hesitated. I had seen his gesture downstairs and I knew he was scared stiff to go back down there alone. I was scared, too, but I did my Boy Scout act for the day and said:

"I'll go down with you, Sergeant. I want to take a look at that ventilator."

While he put the sheet over the broken case, I stared up at the ventilator and saw the bent vane. As I watched, a hand reached through the slit between that vane and the next and bent it some more.

Then the hand, Bill Drager's hand, reached through the widened slit and groped for the nut on the center of the shaft on which the ventilator wheel revolved. Yes, the ventilator could be removed and replaced from the outside. The bent vane made it look as though that had been done.

But why? After the ventilator had been taken off, what then? The opening was too small for a man to get through and besides it was twelve feet above the glass display case.

Sergeant Wilson went past me up the stairs, and I followed him up. The conversation died abruptly as I went through the door, and I suspected that I had been the subject of the talk.

Dr. Skibbine was looking at me.

"The cap's right, Jerry," he said. "You don't look so well. We're going to be around here from now on, so you take the rest of the night off. Get some sleep."

Sleep, I thought. What's that? How could I sleep now? I felt dopy, I'll admit, from lack of it. But the mere thought of turning out a light and lying down alone in a dark room—huh-uh! I must have been a little lightheaded just then, for a goofy parody was running through my brain:

*A ghoul hath murdered sleep, the innocent sleep, sleep that knits . . .*

"Thanks, Dr. Skibbine," I said. "I—I guess it will do me good, at that."

It would get me out of here, somewhere where I could think without a lot of people talking. If I could get the unicorns and rhinoceros out of my mind, maybe I had the key. Maybe, but it didn't make sense yet.

I put on my hat and went outside and walked around the building into the dark alley.

Bill Drager's face was a dim patch in the light that came through the circular hole in the

wall where the ventilator had been.

He saw me coming and called out sharply, "Who's that?" and stood up. When he stood, he seemed to vanish, because it put him back in the darkness.

"It's me—Jerry Grant." I said. "Find out anything, Bill?"

"Just what you see. The ventilator comes out, from the outside. It was just about a foot in diameter. But it isn't a big enough hole for a man." He laughed a little offkey. "A ghoul, I don't know. How big is a ghoul, Jerry?"

"Can it, Bill," I said. "Did you do that in the dark? Didn't you bring a flashlight?"

"No. Look, whoever did it earlier in the night, if somebody did, wouldn't have dared use a light. They'd be too easy to see from either end of the alley. I wanted to see if it could be done in the dark."

"Yes," I said thoughtfully. "But the light from the inside shows."

"Was it on between midnight and two?"

"Um—no. I hadn't thought of that."

I stared at the hole in the wall. Large enough for a man to stick his head into, but not to crawl through.

Bill Drager was still standing back in the dark, but now that my eyes were used to the alley, I could make out the shadowy outline of his body.

"Jerry," he said, "you've been studying this superstition stuff. Just what is a ghoul?"

"Something in Eastern mythology, Bill. An imaginary creature that robs graves and feeds on corpses. The modern use of the word is confined to someone who robs graves, usually for jewelry that is sometimes interred with the bodies. Back in the early days of medicine, bodies were stolen and sold to the anatomists for purposes of disection, too."

"The modern ones don't—uh—"

"There have been psychopathic cases, a few of them. One happened in Paris, in modern times. A man named Bertrand. Charles Fort tells about him in his book *Wild Talents.*

"*Wild Talents,* huh?" said Bill. "What happened?"

"Graves in a Paris cemetery were being dug up by something or someone who—" there in the dark alley, I couldn't say it plainly—"who—uh—acted like a ghoul. They couldn't catch him but they set a blunderbus trap. It got this man Bertrand, and he confessed."

Bill Drager didn't say anything, just stood there. Then, just as though I could read his mind, I got scared because I knew what he was thinking. If anything like that had happened here tonight, there was only one person it could possibly have been.

Me.

Bill Drager was standing there silently, staring at me, and wondering whether I—

Then I knew why the others had stopped talking when I had come up the stairs just a few minutes before, back at the morgue. No, there was not a shred of proof. But there had been a faint unspoken suspicion that somehow seemed a thousand times worse than an accusation I could deny.

I knew, then, that unless this case was solved suspicion would follow me the rest of my life. Something too absurd for open accusation. But people would look at me and wonder, and the mere possibility would make them shudder. Every word I spoke would be weighed to see whether it might indicate an unbalanced mind.

Even Bill Drager, one of my best friends, was wondering about me now.

"Bill," I said, "for God's sake, you don't think—"

"Of course not, Jerry."

But the fact that he knew what I meant before I had finished the sentence, proved I had been right about what he had been thinking.

There was something else in his voice, too, although he had tried to keep it out. Fear. He was alone with me in a dark alley, and I realized now why he had stepped back out of the light so quickly. Bill Drager was a little afraid of me.

But this was no time and place to talk about it. The atmosphere was wrong. Anything I could say would make things worse.

So I merely said, "Well, so long, Bill," as I turned and walked toward the street.

Half a block up the street on the other side was an all-night restaurant, and I headed for it. Not to eat, for I felt as though I would never want to eat again. The very thought of food was sickening. But a cup of coffee might take away some of the numbness in my mind.

Hank Perry was on duty behind the counter, and he was alone.

"Hi, Jerry," he said, as I sat down on a stool at the counter. "Off early tonight?"

I nodded and let it go at that.

"Just a cup of black coffee, Hank," I told him, and forestalled any salestalk by adding, "I'm not hungry. Just ate."

Silly thing to say, I realized the minute I had said it. Suppose someone asked Hank later what I had said when I came in. They all knew, back there, that I had not brought a lunch to work and hadn't eaten. Would I, from now on, have to watch every word I said to avoid slips like that?"

But whatever significance Hank or others might read into my words later, there was nothing odd about them now, as long as Hank didn't know what had happened at the morgue.

He brought my coffee. I stirred in sugar and waited for it to cool enough to drink.

"Nice night out," Hank said.

I hadn't noticed, but I said, "Yeah."

To me it was one terrible night out, but I couldn't tell him that without spilling the rest of the story.

"How was business tonight, Hank?" I asked.

"Pretty slow."

"How many customers," I asked, "did you have between midnight and two o'clock?"

"Hardly any. Why?"

"Hank," I said, "something happened then. Look, I can't tell you about it now, honestly. I don't don't know whether or not it's going to be given out to the newspapers. If it isn't, it would lose me my job even to mention it. But will you think hard if you saw anybody or anything out of the ordinary between twelve and two?"

"Um," said Hank, leaning against the counter thoughtfully. "That's a couple of hours ago. Must have had several customers in here during that time. But all I can remember are regulars. People on night shifts that come in regularly."

"When you're standing at that grill in the window frying something, you can see out across the street," I said. "You ought to be able to see down as far as the alley, because this is a pretty wide street."

"Yeah, I can."

"Did you see anyone walk or drive in there?"

"Golly," said Hank. "Yeah, I did. I think it was around one o'clock. I happened to notice the guy on account of what he was carrying."

I felt my heart hammering with sudden excitement.

"What was he carrying? And what did he look like?"

"I didn't notice what he looked like," said Hank. "He was in shadow most of the time. But he was carrying a bowling ball."

"A bowling ball?"

Hank nodded. "That's what made me notice him. There aren't any alleys—I mean bowling alleys—right around here. I bowl myself so I wondered where this guy had been rolling."

"You mean he was carrying a bowling ball under his arm?"

I was still incredulous, even though Hank's voice showed me he was not kidding.

He looked at me contemptuously.

"No. Bowlers never carry 'em like that on the street. There's a sort of bag that's made for the purpose. A little bigger than the ball, some of them, so a guy can put in his bowling shoes and stuff."

I closed my eyes a moment to try to make sense out of it. Of all the things on this mad night; it seemed the maddest that a bowling ball had been carried into the ally by the morgue—or something the shape of a bowling ball. At just the right time, too. One o'clock.

It would be a devil of a coincidence if the man Hank had seen hadn't been the one.

"You're sure it was a bowling ball case?"

"Positive. I got one like it myself. And the way he carried it, it was just heavy enough to have the ball in it." He looked at me curiously. "Say, Jerry, I never thought of it before, but a case like that would be a handy thing to carry a bomb in. Did someone try to plant a bomb at the morgue?"

"No."

"Then if it wasn't a bowling ball—and you act like you think it wasn't—what would it have been?"

"I wish I knew," I told him. "I wish to high heaven I knew."

I downed the rest of my coffee and stood up.

'Thanks a lot, Hank," I said. "Listen, you think it over and see if you can remember anything else about that case or the man who carried it. I'll see you later."

What I needed was some fresh air, so I started walking. I didn't pay any attention to where I was going; I just walked.

My feet didn't take me in circles, but my mind did. A bowling ball! Why would a bowling ball, or something shaped like it, be carried into the alley back of the morgue? A bowling ball would fit into that ventilator hole, all right, and a dropped bowling ball would have broken the glass of the case.

But a bowling ball wouldn't have done—the rest of it.

I vaguely remembered some mention of bowling earlier in the evening and thought back to what it was. Oh yes. Dr. Skibbine and Mr. Paton had been going to bowl a game instead of playing a second game of chess. But neither of them had bowling balls along. Anyway, if Dr. Skibbine had told the truth, they had both been home by midnight.

If not a bowling ball, then what? A ghoul? A spherical ghoul?

The thought was so incongruously horrible that I wanted to stop, right there in the middle of the sidewalk and laugh like a maniac. Maybe I was near hysteria.

I thought of going back to the morgue and telling them about it, and laughing. Watching Quenlin's face and Wilson's when I told them that our guest had been a man-eating bowling ball. A spherical—

Then I stopped walking, because all of a sudden I knew what the bowling ball had been, and I had the most important part of the answer.

Somewhere a clock was striking half-past three, and I looked around to see where I was. Oak Street, only a few doors from Grant Parkway. That meant I had come fifteen or sixteen blocks from the morgue and that I was only a block and a half from the zoo. At the zoo, I could find out if I was right.

So I started walking again. A block and a half later I was across the street from the zoo right in front of Mr. Paton's house. Strange-

ly, there was a light in one of the downstairs rooms.

I went up onto the porch and rang the bell. Mr. Paton came to answer it. He was wearing a dressing gown, but I could see shoes and the bottoms of his trouser legs under it.

He didn't look surprised at all when he opened the door.

"Yes, Jerry?" he said, almost as though he had been expecting me.

"I'm glad you're still up, Mr. Paton," I said. "Could you walk across with me and get me past the guard at the gate? I'd like to look at one of the cages and verify —something."

"You guessed then, Jerry?"

"Yes, Mr. Paton," I told him. Then I had a sudden thought that scared me a little. "You were seen going into the alley," I added quickly, "and the man who saw you knows I came here. He saw you carrying—"

He held up his hand and smiled.

"You needn't worry, Jerry," he said. "I know it's over—the minute anybody is smart enough to guess. And—well, I murdered a man all right, but I'm not the type to murder another to try to cover up, because I can see where that would lead. The man I did kill deserved it, and I gambled on— Well never mind all that."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"His name was Mark Leedom. He was my assistant four years ago. I was foolish at that time— I'd lost money speculating and I stole some zoo funds. They were supposed to be used for the purchase of— Never mind the details. Mark Leedom found out and got proof.

"He made me turn over most of the money to him, and he—retired, and moved out of town. But he's been coming back periodically to keep shaking me down. He was a rat, Jerry, a worse crook than I ever thought of being. This time I couldn't pay so I killed him."

"You were going to make it look like an accident on the Mill Road?" I said. "You killed him here and took him—"

"Yes, I was going to have the car run over his head, so he wouldn't be identified. I missed by inches, but I couldn't try again because another car was coming, and I had to keep on driving away.

"Luckily, Doc Skibbine didn't know him. It was while Doc was in South America that Leedom worked for me. But there are lots of people around who did know him. Some curiosity seeker would have identified him in the week they hold an unidentified body and —well, once they knew who he was and traced things back, they'd have got to me eventually for the old business four years ago if not the fact that I killed him."

"So that's why you had to make him unidentifiable," I said. "I see. He looked familiar to Bill Drager, but Bill couldn't place him."

He nodded. "Bill was just a patrolman then. He probably had

seen Leedom only a few times, but someone else— Well, Jerry, you go back and tell them about it. Tell them I'll be here."

"Gee, Mr. Paton, I'm sorry I got to," I said. "Isn't there anything—"

"No. Go and get them. I won't run away, I promise you. And tell Doc he wouldn't have beat me that chess game tonight if I hadn't let him. With what I had to do, I wanted to get out of there early. Good night, Jerry."

He eased me out onto the porch again before I quite realized why he had never had a chance to tell Dr. Skibbine himself. Yes, he meant for them to find him here when they came, but not alive.

I almost turned to the door again, to break my way in and stop him. Then I realized that everything would be easier for him if he did it his way.

Yes, he was dead by the time they sent men out to bring him in. Even though I had expected it, I guess I had a case of the jitters when they phoned in the news, and I must have showed it, because Bill Drager threw an arm across my shoulders.

"Jerry," he said, "this has been the devil of a night for you. You need a drink. Come on."

The drink made me feel better and so did the frank admiration in Drager's eyes. It was so completely different from what I had seen there back in the alley.

Jerry," he told me, "you ought to get on the Force. Figuring out that—of all things—he had used an armadillo."

"But what else was possible? Look! All those ghoul legends trace back to beasts that are eaters of carrion. Like hyenas. A hyena could have done what was done back there in the morgue. But no one could have handled a hyena—pushed it through that ventilator hole with a rope on it to pull it up again.

"But an armadillo is an eater of corpses, too. It gets frightened when handled and curls up into a ball, like a bowling ball. It doesn't make any noise, and you could carry it in a bag like the one Hank described. It has an armored shell that would break the glass of the display case if Paton lowered it to within a few feet and let it drop the rest of the way. And of course he looked down with a flashlight to see—"

Bill Drager shuddered a little.

"Learning is a great thing if you like it," he said. "Studying origins of superstitions, I mean. But me, I want another drink. How about you?"

# NOW! A FISH LURE THAT DIVES CLIMBS ... FLOPS ON ITS SIDE BY ITS OWN POWER!

Propelled by its own power — even on a slack line! It dives — climbs — flops on its side like a crippled minnow — **all on its own power!**

**Yes! It drives the fish around you to such a frenzy with its movements that they practically tear the rod out of your hands — they're so anxious to get their mouths into the hook!**

Prove it yourself! Try it for one full month entirely at our risk! Pull in catch after catch that makes your friends' eyes pop open in astonishment — OR IT DOESN'T COST YOU A PENNY! Here's how:

### ACTUALLY MOVES UNDER ITS OWN POWER LIKE A CRIPPLED MINNOW

Yes! Just picture this revolutionary, completely-patented, SELF-PROPELLED FISH LURE to yourself! Imagine a water-resistant, weather-resistant, wear-resistant plastic lure—slashing through the water in brilliant reds and whites and yellows — measuring only 2 inches by ¾ inches — **and yet carrying enough fuel inside it to cut through the water for as much as one full hour from a single load! Plunging down to fifteen foot depths — rising to the surface almost once every minute!**

Think of it! To fuel up this amazing, live-action lure, all you do is this! Simply snap open the fuel chamber — pour in the absolutely harmless fuel — and close the fuel chamber again! It takes less than 60 seconds! You don't even dirty your hands! But then — simply cast or lower that power-packed lure into fresh or salt water — **and get set for the fishing thrill of your life!**

For perhaps one minute, that lure will float quietly on the surface of the water! But then the water will reach the fuel charge inside — the lure will seem to shudder for a second — and then it will spring dramatically to "life!"

**Instantly, the nose of the lure will point downward, and it will begin its first descent! Slowly, jerkily, like a maimed minnow, it will swim noisily downward!** If no fish intercepts it, on this first exploration downward, it will then automatically stop its descent — slowly raise up its nose — and begin its irresistible climb to the surface again!

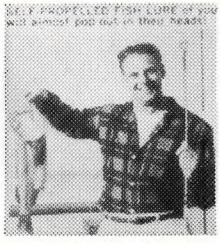
**Yes! It drives the fish around you to such a frenzy with its movements that they practically tear the rod out of your hands to get their mouths into the hook!**

### PROVE IT YOURSELF WITHOUT RISKING A PENNY!

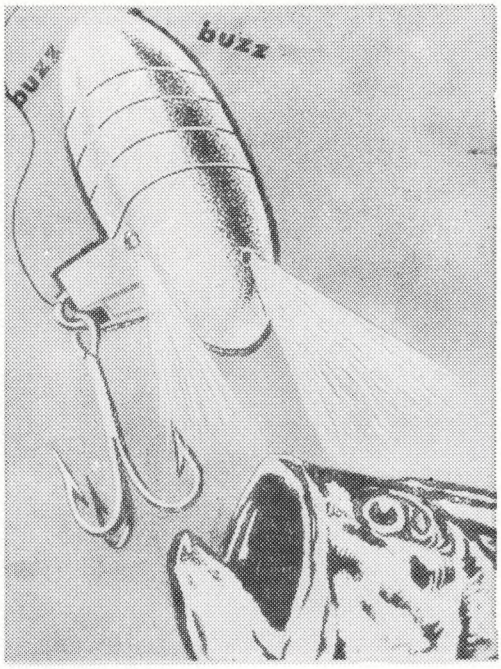
No wonder this revolutionary SELF-PROPELLED FISH LURE took six full years to develop! Already granted United States Government Patent #2,932,916, **here's what this amazing Live-Action Fish Lure will do for YOU** — from the very first moment you try it entirely at our risk!

First of all, this Self-Propelled Fish Lure frees you forever from the filthy tasks of digging for worms and crawlers, catching frogs, or paying 50c to $1 for a bucket of minnows that die on you before you can even get them in the boat! It **frees you forever** from paying $3, $4 or even $5 for a fancy, "Dead-as-a-Duck" lure — that only works when you tow it — that you could never even dream of actually moving under its own power behind you!

Yes! It means that tomorrow — for the first time in your life — you can go out in fresh water or salt water — lakes, streams, rivers or oceans — **and haul in the eye-poppers with a lure that actually drives those fish into a frenzy with its crippled minnow action!**



**TRY THEM AT OUR RISK!**




You have nothing to lose! You try it for one full month entirely at our risk! Its cost is only $2.98 complete with enough fuel to last up to a full year, and full instructions. It comes in four dazzling colors — your choice of red and yellow — yellow and white — red and white — black and white. Why not buy one of each?

## MAIL NO-RISK COUPON TODAY!

**G. & K. SALES CO., Dept. 3 M, 31 W. 47th St., New York 36, N. Y.**

Yes! I want to try your revolutionary new SELF-PROPELLED FISH LURE, entirely at your risk! I am enclosing only the low introductory price checked below! I understand that I may try this amazing Fish Lure for one full month without risking a penny! If I am not amazed and delighted — I may simply return it to you at the end of that time for every cent of my purchase price back!

☐ **SINGLE SELF-PROPELLED FISH LURE, with one year supply of fuel — ONLY $2.98.**

☐ **TWO SELF-PROPELLED FISH LURES, with two years supply of fuel — ONLY $5.50.**

☐ **FOUR SELF-PROPELLED FISH LURES, with five years supply of fuel — ONLY $9.98.**

**CHECK COLOR LURES DESIRED** ☐ Black & White ☐ Red and White ☐ Yellow and White ☐ Red and Yellow

NAME _____

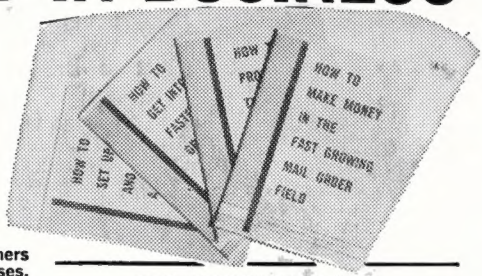
ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZONE _____ STATE _____

☐ **CHECK HERE FOR C.O.D. DELIVERY.** Send only $1 good-will deposit with your order. Pay postman balance plus C.O.D. postage and handling charges. Same money-back guarantee, of course.

# HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS

***. . . OWN A FRANCHISE BUSINESS***
***. . . ENTER THE MAIL ORDER FIELD***
***. . . PROFIT FROM A SIDELINE BUSINESS***
***. . . SET UP A NEW BUSINESS***




## STARTING WITH AS LITTLE AS $95

### Read These New Research Reports Which Tell You How

**Last year 82 men made fortunes for themselves and scores of others earned $30,000 a year in their own fast growing small businesses. Some started with as little as $95 capital. Now a new 4-report survey reveals these fast growing small businesses . . . tells how you can follow in the footsteps of men who are becoming rich in them.**

**You learn how to profit in the exciting new fields of FRANCHISING — MAIL ORDER — REAL ESTATE — SIDELINE VENTURES. You get vital information on where specific opportunities are . . . whom to contact . . . how much of an investment you need . . . what money-making steps to follow to make good "on your own" either spare-time or full-time. THE FIRST SURVEY OF ITS KIND — NOW AVAILABLE ON A SPECIAL NO RISK OFFER.**

### FIRST SURVEY OF ITS KIND

**This two-year research project evaluated thousands of small businesses and picked the leaders that showed (1) high rate of profits (2) high rate of expansion (3) continued rapid growth for the 1960s as predicted by industry economists and government agencies. Any business that required large capital outlay was eliminated. Thus here you get the "cream of the crop" of small businesses most likely to continue their fast growth rate in which you can make your start with small capital. Send for this 4-report survey NOW—it gives vital information that could start you on a successful new career.**

### REPORT ONE — HOW TO GET INTO THE FASTEST GROWING FRANCHISE BUSINESSES

The greatest revolution in business today is the big swing to franchising. Here is the first report to show many little-known franchises that require small capital, yet offer outstanding profits. For example.

How to apply the discount-house success formula to a new field (the self-service concept, never used before in this area is paying off) . . . How to invest as little as $155 to get into America's fastest growing pastime activity (sales of one company in this field rose from $340,000 to 12 million dollars in 7 years) . . . How to sell the newest auto safety invention, now being offered to franchised distributors.

How to get into the big money liquor field (gross profit per unit sold is $1080) . . . How to get into sales franchises where distributor incomes range to $60,000 annually . . . How to develop SIX sources of profit from ONE retail operation . . . How to get into a recession-proof company that has grown 600% in the last 10 years.

How to get in on the educational boom (economists predict double enrollments in next ten years; two companies are growing even faster in a neglected phase of the educational market) . . . PLUS many other franchise opportunities . . . in selling, one-man businesses, retailing, services, manufacturing.

### REPORT TWO — HOW TO MAKE MONEY IN THE FAST GROWING MAIL ORDER FIELD

Probably no other field offers such explosive opportunities as does mail order. **This revealing report tells you:** How to find successful products, test them with small capital and get your business underway fast. How to price and package your product . . . What promotional appeals to use . . . How to figure costs, breakeven points, how much you can pay to get an order by mail . . . How to restyle a product for mail order . . . How to squeeze more business from lists. How to cash in on today's most profitable mail-order operation that brought one company $300,000 net profit in one year . . . How to operate your business "pay as you go" on profits . . . How to go after small profits or try for a fortune yet hedge against loss . . . How one company produced one million dollars worth of business by mail in one shot.

How to make tests, analyze results, how to use direct mail, space ads, learn vital information from a competitor's operation . . . How to contact the right people who can help you . . . PLUS much more!

### REPORT THREE — HOW TO PROFIT IN THE FASTEST GROWING SIDELINE BUSINESSES

**Thousands of men today are earning second incomes in sideline ventures. Many have started out part time with small capital and, because the sidelines became so profitable, they've gone into them full time. This Report tells you the fastest growing sidelines and the methods needed to make them pay. For example:**

**Opportunities in Rack Jobbing.** How a capital outlay of $730 can bring $3,000 a year for a few hours work a week. How to find the right item for successful rack jobbing. How you can rack job one of the country's top lines for as little as $95.91. How to get into the booming drug field via rack jobbing.

**Opportunities in Real Estate.** How to profit from odd pieces of real estate that are poor building plots yet are suitable for other, profitable uses. How to find good land buys. How to make money on the boom in low-cost vacation homes. How to make money in real estate without a cash investment by using options. How to profit in prefabs . . . in mobile motels. How to make real estate profits through tie-in with franchise arrangements. How to become a dealer in one of the country's most publicized new homes for $100 . . . PLUS MUCH MORE.

**Opportunities in Part-Time Work.** How to manufacture, at home, a $24.95 product for $2.80 in materials cost. How to get into a food business requiring no active work, in which your investment could double in a year. Profitable sidelines for men who can work with their hands . . . PLUS MUCH MORE.

### REPORT FOUR — HOW TO SET UP AND BUILD A BUSINESS WITH SMALL CAPITAL

Be careful not to overextend yourself when you start with small capital. You need special methods that let you start out small . . . that steer you away from failure and guide you to success. This Report shows you these methods, including:

How to evaluate a business venture . . . How to figure sales against inventory costs, administrative expenses and overhead to arrive at a realistic profit margin . . . Survey of 28 different types of businesses to guide you.

How to determine, through an exclusive new worksheet, how much capital you need to start a business . . . How to figure breakeven points . . . When to keep hands off a business . . . How to raise cash, little known tips on financing . . . The best form of business for you . . . How to get tax benefits.

How to build a business, plan your rate of growth, avoid common pitfalls, boost sales and profits . . . PLUS MUCH MORE.

**SAVE 25%** — The complete set of 4 Books on **How To Succeed In Business** is $8.00, but for the next two weeks the Publisher is making this special offer: If you order **now** with this coupon, you can get your set at the **special price of only $5.95.**

Look over the four reports for 10 days. See for yourself how they can start you on a profitable new career immediately. Put them to any test you wish. If after 10 days, you're not completely satisfied, return the reports for a full refund of your money.

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**Report 3** — How to Profit in the Fastest Growing Sideline Businesses.
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